

Writing, Presenting, and Managing Your Thesis/Dissertation

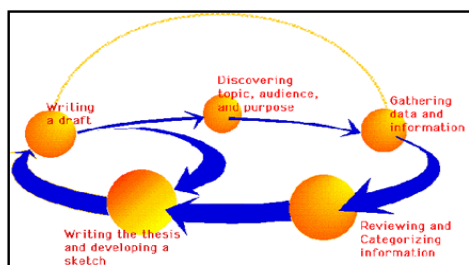
ECE Seminar – Friday, Sept. 6, 2013

Brought to you by the Tomás Rivera Center,
Graduate Student Learning Assistance
Presenter: Emma Hashman, emma.hashman@utsa.edu

Agenda

- Tips for research writing
- Presentation skills
- Managing your thesis/dissertation
- Challenges?

The Writing Process



From the Cleveland State University Writing Center

Overcome Writing Blocks

- Missing info/bored?**
 - Do more research and reading; talk with others about your project
 - Write before you are "ready"
 - Change your perspective on the writing/topic
- Don't like writing**
 - Realize that no one can understand what you haven't written; research needs to be shared!
 - Start small simple rituals to make writing more pleasurable
 - Keep a sustainable pace
- Internal Editor**
 - Ban the internal editor
 - Highlight text you don't like and come back later to revise
 - Color block: Writing in a different color and then successively changing colors as you go through your revision and editing passes.

Give big projects a little time each day

Participant Groups	Mean Pages Written or Revised per Year
First Group: attended workshop but chose to continue to write occasionally, in big blocks of time	17
Second Group: attended workshop and agreed to write daily for at least 15 minutes and record it	64
Third Group: attended workshop and agreed to write daily for at least 15 minutes, record it, and be held accountable for doing so	157

Robert Boice (1989)

Set dates (i.e. mini deadlines)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday / Sunday
Feb 16 - Feb 21	15	16	17	18	19 Find 5 Potential Sources	Find 5 Sources
Feb 22 - Feb 28	22 Find 5 Sources	23 Skim Sources & eliminate	24 1 source	25 1 source	26 1 source	2 sources
Mar 1 - Mar 7	1 1 source	2 1 source	3 1 source	4 1 source	5 1 source	Write summary
Mar 8 - Mar 14	8 Revise	9	10 Edit	11 Annotated Bib. DUE	12	Draft intro
Mar 15 - Mar 21	15 Determine topics	16 Graph connections	17 Spring Break	18 Synthesize 1 topic	19 revise	
Mar 22 - Mar 28	22	23	24	25	26	
Mar 29 - Apr 4	29	30	31	1	2	
Apr 5 - Apr 11	5	6 Revise	7	8 Draft for partner's DUE		
Apr 12 - Apr 18	12	13	14	15 Draft w/ comments DUE	16 Revise	
Apr 19 - Apr 25	19 Rework Introduction	20 Rework Conclusion	21	22	23	
Apr 26 - May 2	26	27 Revise	28	29 Practice paper for presentation	30 Final edit	1 Final paper DUE
May 3 - May 9	3	4	5	Finale Exams		

Clear, Plain, Concise Words

- Some students use inflated language to appear more intelligent (Becker, 1986).
 - Many published authors write this way, especially in academia; therefore, students assume that this is correct.
- Make sure your writing is not pretentious, overly sophisticated, or fancy.
 - Do not worry about sounding smart.
 - Focus on simplifying language without sacrificing content.

How do we avoid redundancy?

- Take a break from your paper.
 - Return to it, looking just for redundancies.
- Ask yourself, Am I saying something twice?
 - If so, is the second way better stated?
 - If the second statement is better or more clear, keep that one and delete the first.
 - Remember you are not looking for increased word count.
 - Is the repeated statement saying something new and relevant?
 - If so, you might want to keep it but make it less redundant by shortening it.

Use Shorter, Simpler Words

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflated diction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Cognizant</i> – <i>Conceptualize</i> – <i>Effectuate</i> – <i>Multiplicity of</i> – <i>Subsequent to</i> • Cluttered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Aware of the fact that</i> – <i>Due to the fact that</i> – <i>At the present time/at this point in time</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Aware</i> – <i>Think of</i> – <i>Do</i> – <i>Many</i> – <i>After</i> • Exact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Know</i> – <i>Because</i> – <i>Now</i> |
|--|--|

Presentation Skills

Define your Objective & Desired Outcome

Objective

- What is your purpose?
 - To inform?
 - To discuss?
 - To promote?
 - To decide?
 - To Persuade?
 - To build relationships?
 - To develop skills in audience (teach)?

Desired outcome

- After the presentation, you want your participants to:
 - Know:
 - _____
 - Do:
 - _____
 - Think:
 - _____
 - Feel:
 - _____

Summarize your entire presentation in one sentence:

Assess the Presentation Setting

- Where/when will the presentation take place?
- How long am I expected to speak?
- How many people will attend?
- Technology?
- Where will I stand or sit in relation to the audience?
- Will I be able to interact with the listeners?
- Who else will be presenting?

Nonverbal Communication

- **Be aware of your body language**
- If you are at ease and feeling confident:
 - Hands might be folded or relaxed in your lap or at your side; your smiling; body would be relaxed; you make direct eye contact.
- If you are uptight or nervous:
 - Your hands might be clenched or holding something tightly; your lips tightly pursed; you play with your hair or fidget.
- If you are angry:
 - Your eyes might be squinting; one eyebrow raised; your fists clenched; your body stiff.
- If you feel bored or uninterested:
 - Your body might be slumped over; your fingers tap on the table or play with a pen; hands folded across your chest.

Audiovisuals

- Handouts
 - Listeners have something to take home
 - If there is no technology or it breaks you are still okay
 - Format might allow interactivity, not as passive as a PPT
- Flipchart/dry erase
- Overheads/slides
- PowerPoint
- Music
- Television
- Other?

Handouts

Give to audience:

Professional Presentation Skills
Presenter: Emma Hashman
Architecture Series, Monday, October 8

What are some credibility busters?

Communication Basics

- Information flows from sender to receiver through potential barriers.
- Types of speeches include memory, reading, and extemporaneous.

Speech Structure

- Write your thesis, audience, purpose.
- Identify what audiovisuals you will use.

Audiovisuals

- PowerPoint, Prezi, SlideRocket
- Handouts
- Be careful of bad powerpoint practices!

Keep for yourself:

Overview of creating a speech

1. Determine the purpose of the speech
2. Identify the audience
3. Research the topic
4. Organize the material
5. Write the speech
6. Practice the speech

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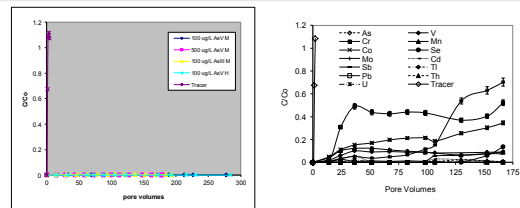
Figures

- Must be labeled and presented as in a scholarly article
- Figures, labels, captions, and key must be clear and legible to the entire audience
- Only pertinent information
- Copy and paste does not usually produce clear images
- Create labels in PowerPoint or use Photoshop.

Best Use of Graphs & Charts

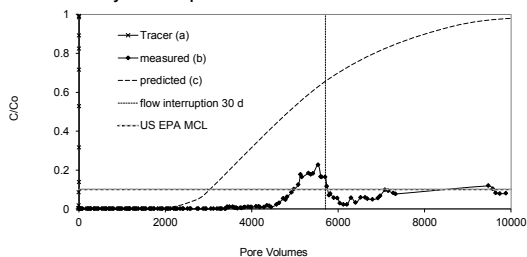
Type	Best Use
Line graph	To represent trends or information that changes over time
Bar graph	To compare individual points of information, magnitudes
Pie graph	To show proportions such as sales by region, shares
Pictogram	To show simple comparisons in picture form
Flow chart	To diagram a process
Diagram (schematic drawing)	To show how something works or is constructed
Table	To show large amounts of information in an easily viewable form

Figures



No title, bad scaling, unclear muddled information, small font, color or lack thereof is confusing

Heavy Metal Sorption to Nano-Metal Oxides in Batch Studies



Shipley, HJ; Engates, KE; Guettner, AM. 2009. Study of Iron Oxide Nanoparticles in Soil for Remediation of Arsenic. Journal of Nanoparticle Research. (In review)

Clearly labeled and titled, all lines are clear, scaling is good, properly cited, large enough to be seen and understood

Bad PowerPoint Practices

- Slide numbers
- Layout blunders
- Media & animations that have no point
- Reading to audience

Limit Slide Numbers



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Layout blunders

- Small font
 - 12 point
 - 36 point is preferred
- Unreadable or inconsistent font types
- ALL CAPS
- First Letter Of Every Word Capitalized
- Lack of contrast
- Too many words on one slide. This is often a problem if the font size is also too small so that you feel you can put more information in. You tend to ramble and ramble and ramble on, thinking the more I fit on a slide, the better, right? I mean I really need to give them as much information as possible. Or am I missing the point of PowerPoint?

Unnecessary Animations



Avoid Reading to Audience

- If all you're going to do is read exactly what is on the slide to the audience why not just save the time and print up what you are going say and hand it out to them. Just skip the middle man.

How Do You Rehearse?

- Read your talk aloud.
- Prepare outline notes/PPT slides.
- Tape the talk.
- Practice in front of an audience.
- Join a Toastmasters club

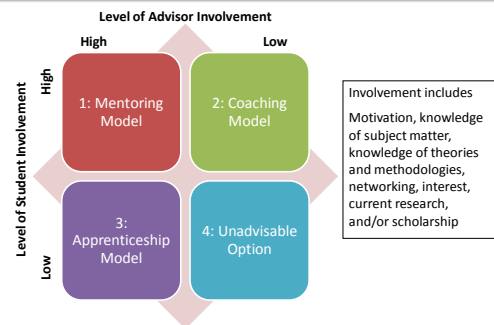
Tips for powerful presentations

- Create rapport.
- Get to your most important points right away.
- Be prepared.
- Invite participation.
- Practice.
- Don't assume your audience has read anything.
- Have answers prepared.

Managing your Thesis/Dissertation

- Working with committee members
- Overcoming writing blocks
- Defense preparation

Choosing an advisor & topic



Types of Committee Members

- Advocate
- Cheerleader
- Writing guru
- Research guru
- Devil's advocate

Managing the Committee

- Set deadlines for yourself and them
- Set clear expectations from the beginning (on both sides)
- Be realistic about their roles
- Establish regular meeting times
- Be open minded to constructive criticism
- Don't make them wait for the final product
 - There should be no surprises at your defense
- Don't forget the power of appreciation

Trouble Scenarios

- How do you respond to...
 - Your advisor doesn't listen to what you can and want to do; instead, she keeps insisting on her sense of what you should be working on.
 - Your advisor is hard to get a hold of, doesn't return your calls, and is often inaccessible or out of town.
 - Your advisor criticizes you so strongly that it takes you weeks to get back to work after a meeting.
 - Your advisor gives you overly positive feedback on your work and nothing constructive to improve on.

Defense Preparation

- Be the expert. Rozycki (1991) suggests expanding the answers to certain questions (some may not apply to all thesis/dissertations.)
- Your PPT should at least:
 - Review the research questions & methodology
 - Get straight to the point and present the findings
 - Stick to what you know
 - Focus their attention
- Sit in on other defenses
- Practice, practice, practice!

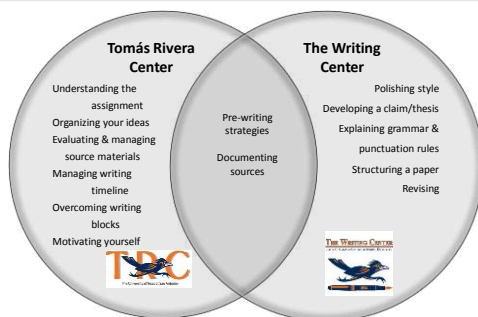
What if you run into trouble?

- Do not be intimidated.
- Be confident but not arrogant.
- Do not panic if a committee member disagrees with you. Refute their argument and move on.
- If you don't know the answer, admit it. You can always partially answer or ask the questioner or another committee member their thoughts on it.
- Don't babble. Take a moment.
- If you don't understand, ask them to clarify.
- Worse comes to worse, ask for a quick break.

References and Resources

- O'Hair, D., Rubenstein, H., & Stewart, R. (2004). *A pocket guide to public speaking*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- TED Talks: www.ted.com
- Toastmasters: <http://www.toastmasters.org/>
- Poster Design: <http://colinpurrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign>

UTSA Campus Wide Academic Research Writing Resources For Graduate Students



TRC Graduate Student Services

- Academic Coaching
- Workshops (on Blackboard)
- Thesis/Dissertation Group
- Writing Institutes (spring & summer)
- The Study Spot, M-Th, 4-6pm, DT TRC



MS 1.02.02 (Main); DB 2.114 (Downtown)
210-458-4694

Our website: www.utsa.edu/trcss/gsla
On Blackboard: *UTSA Grad Assist*

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