

Some reflections on writing, rewriting and righting the thesis

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Outline

1. *Research glamour vs. writing drudgery*
2. What does it mean to write a thesis?
3. Is writing a thesis different from writing shorter pieces?
4. Some issues I've encountered
5. My strategies to cope with writing stress
6. Comments? Tips?

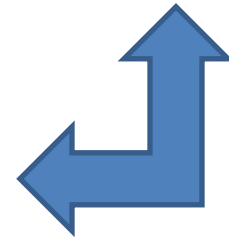
Research glamour vs. writing drudgery

- **First 4 years of my PT in-context PhD study:**

Planning, preparing and conducting research, reviewing the literature, engaging with my field data = FUN and EXCITEMENT: *research glamour* 😊

- **Year 5:**

Writing process = hard work



- Previously => more active research, more 'external' action and interactions with people
- Writing => quiet, solitary activity; daily slog

My desk



What does it mean to write a thesis?

Some ideas emerging:

- **Long-term commitment to a regular effort continuing with the same activity**
- Planning
- Consistency

But, in truth, I don't fully know yet what it means and hope that Paul (sorry, Dr Paul Breen) will be able to explain.

Is writing a thesis different from writing shorter pieces?

This I already know: Yes, it is.

Here is why:

1. The article/ book chapter writing tunnel is short and straight, and the end light visible from the start.
2. The thesis writing tunnel is a long, winding tunnel and it is hard to see the exit from the entrance.

Some issues I've encountered

- **Time management (work and family; procrastination; “slowmo” style)**
- Too many words (non-native speaker problem?)
- Too few words (non-native speaker problem?)
- Perfectionism
- Compulsive rewriting
- Tone? Voice?
- Over-reading
- Back ache
- Panic

My strategies to cope with writing stress

- **Routine, regularity**
- Work at my own pace (1,000 words a day? Really?)
- Write, leave, read what I wrote and/or let others read what I wrote, rewrite
- *Plan/have a chart to remember what I wrote in previous chapters* (or constantly re-read them for detail to check consistency)
- *Read what I wrote in previous chapters* to see if it goes with the current one
- Read what others have written on related topics, *but not too much* (distraction)
- Write down my frustrations (don't bore family with them)
- Use a foot rest under the desk
- Walk (*mens sana in corpore sano*)
- Drink a lot of water and coffee, eat dark chocolate and oily fish

Comments? Tips?

- *Am I on the right track in my thinking on thesis writing?*
- *Has anyone else experienced similar issues, frustrations?*
- *In other words, is this normal?*

Sympathetic comments preferred, but constructive criticism is welcome, too. 😊

Recommendation

Umberto Eco's *How to Write a Thesis?*

Links to related reviews/articles:

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/07/how-to-write-a-thesis-umberto-eco-review-dream>

<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/how-to-write-a-thesis-by-umberto-eco/2019071.article>

<http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-guide-to-thesis-writing-that-is-a-guide-to-life>

<http://www.openculture.com/2015/03/umberto-ecos-how-to-write-a-thesis.html>

Thank you!

Remember the first LTE conference?

The 1st LTE conference, 3rd June 2011

