TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

JUMP-START YOUR WRITING

TIPS AND METHODS FOR PLANNING AND WRITING ACADEMIC TEXTS

METHODS OF WRITING FOR STUDENTS AND LECTURERS

SZD

Writing Center

Imprint

Contact

Dresden University of Technology
Center for Continuing Education / Writing Center of the TU Dresden
Mommsenstr. 6
01069 Dresden
Germany

schreibzentrum@mailbox.tu-dresden.de

Information on the services offered by the Writing Center, such as writing advice, writing groups, counseling for teachers, workshops for students and teachers, and much more:

https://tu-dresden.de/deinstudienerfolg/szd

English translation: Ulrike Samuelsson, Leonie Reuter

Cover design: © 2023 Geistesfunke, prop. André Busch

Cat graphics: © 2018 Pixelkonsum, prop. Antje Mewes, 2023 Geistesfunke, prop. André Busch

Typesetting, graphics, layout: Geistesfunke, Prop. André Busch, Rethelstraße 25, 01139 Dresden

Print: Druckerei & Verlag Fabian Hille

The German National Library lists this publication in the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

2nd, revised edition

Published by

Writing Center c/o Center for Continuing Education of Dresden University of Technology

Rose Sharon Király
Theresa Beerbaum
Paulina Hösl
Ulrike Samuelsson

With the assistance of

Nina Melching
Robert Bosse
Leonie Reuter
Andrej Swidsinski

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25368/2023.150

Quotable URL: https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa2-872382

Supported by funds of the Hochschulpakt 2020

Evaluation

Do you have any comments, praise or suggestions for improving *Jump-Start your Writing*? We are happy to receive your feedback:

Preface to the 2nd, revised Edition

Dear students, dear lecturers,

Scientific writing is often learned and practiced during your university studies. The Writing Center of the TU Dresden (SZD) supports this process with workshops, individual consultations and the conception of (self-learning) materials. We have compiled the collected methods, tips, and checklists from eight years of work at the Writing Center in this booklet ***Jump-Start Your Writing (completely revised, 2nd edition)***. The materials are intended to help you become aware of and strengthen your own writing skills. This way, you can tackle your individual writing process in a more productive and motivated way in the long run.

Jump-Start Your Writing offers an interdisciplinary insight into the craft of academic writing. The booklet supports students with and without writing experience in writing all types of academic texts during their studies, such as term papers, protocols, document theses, and final theses.

This booklet can also help you find answers to the following questions, among others, during the writing process:

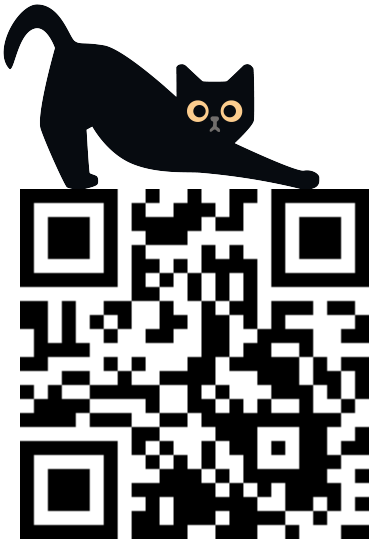
- How do I get organized?
- How do I prepare for meetings with my supervisor(s)?
- How do I read scientific texts?
- How do I find my research question?
- How do I get into the writing process?
- How do I revise my text?

The methods presented are a selection. They were chosen with the aim of looking at a problem from as many different angles as possible as well as to choose methods that you can easily try out on your own. In general, we recommend trying out the presented (writing) exercises in an individually guided writing consultation at the SZD.

Jump-Start Your Writing can be used in two different ways: You can either work through the booklet systematically if you wish to prepare for an upcoming writing task. Alternatively, you can use our guide to find ad hoc solutions to acute problems during the writing process.

In any case, we recommend that you first look at the model of the writing process on page 9. It may be helpful to then determine your own writing type (page 58). If you are specifically looking for strategies, you can look at the method overview of the respective writing phase, select a suitable method, try it out, reflect on it, and, if necessary, adapt it to your own way of working.

The booklet ***Jump-Start Your Writing*** is available in print and online on the Writing Center website.



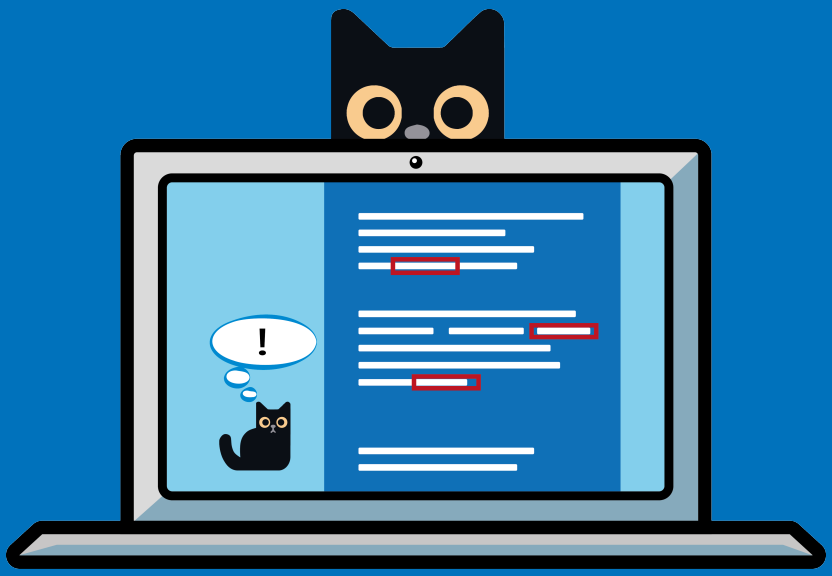
We would like to thank our cooperation partners at the TU Dresden, colleagues at other writing centers, and of course the many students whose needs are ultimately our main focus.

The SZD team wishes you success in writing your scientific papers.

Paulina Sharon

Ulrike Theresa

Table of Contents



Basics

Method: Work Phases in Scientific Writing Projects

Work Phases in Scientific Writing Projects

In order to keep an overview and to plan your writing project, it is helpful to break down the writing process into single, manageable steps. Models such as the one pictured below provide orientation. The model breaks down the writing process into six major phases and can serve you as a basis for your individual work and time schedule.

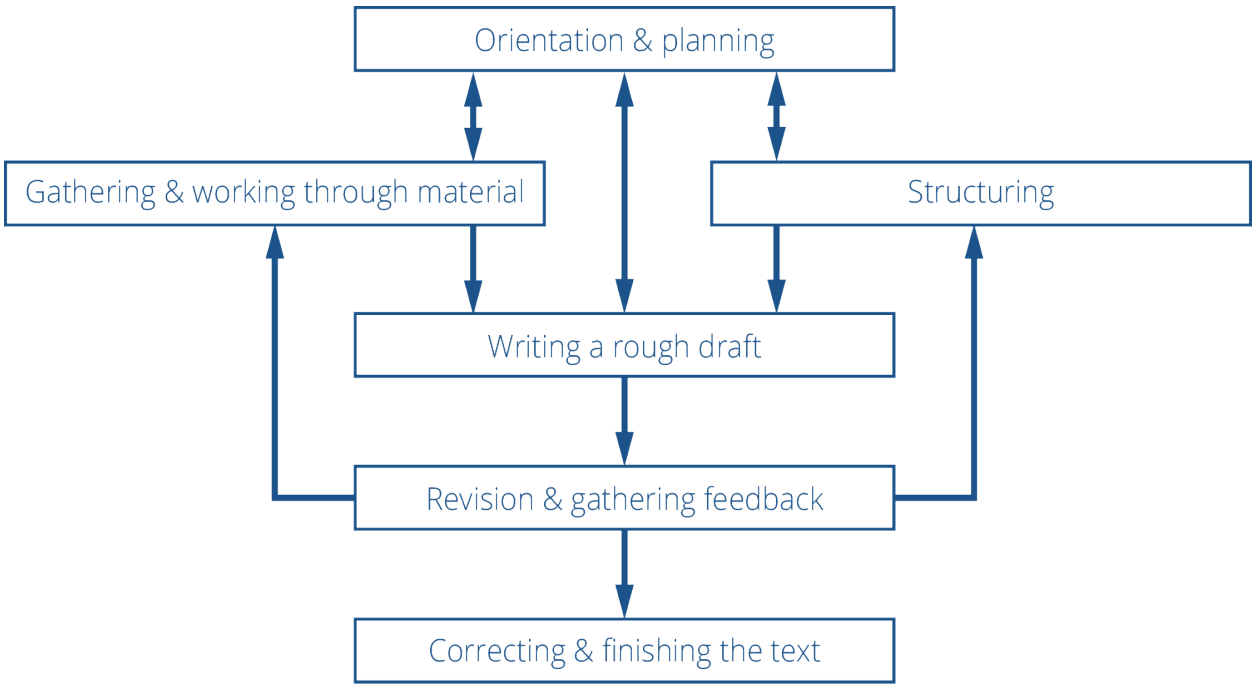


Figure 1. Phases of the scientific writing process. Own illustration according to Grieshammer et al. p. 58

The arrows show that the work phases do not follow a linear order. They influence each other. You might even revise work steps and repeat them (cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 58). The work steps gathering & working through material and structuring usually take place at the same time.

Two examples: 1) If, for example, a gap in content becomes apparent during the revision, you go back to literature research and reading. Newly discovered aspects during this research may lead to a different chapter structure. 2) If new findings emerge during reading or writing the rough draft, the research question will be reformulated.

Work phases – a closer look

What needs to be done in each case differs depending on the subject area and the type of text. The following explanations are general and are intended to provide guidance. What should happen during the entire writing process (i.e. during all phases) is to read, write (e.g. notes, excerpts, auxiliary texts), and exchange ideas with others about the writing project (e.g. explain the topic, clarify questions, get inspiration).

Table a: Work phases & activities

Work phase	Activity
Orientation and planning	• clarify writing assignment and expectations • first research • find topic, define objective / research question • clarify questions regarding content and organization with your supervisor • choose your methodology • develop a first outline (working tool for the whole writing process; it is helpful to develop the outline early and to keep readjusting it during the process) (cf. ibid. pp. 62)
Gathering and working through material	• research literature • read up on the topic • record / evaluate what you have read • collect / evaluate data (e.g. experiments, simulations, calculations, surveys) (cf. ibid. pp. 64)
Structuring	• organize and structure data / literature you have read (what goes in which section of the text?) • further develop the outline (cf. ibid. pp. 66)
Writing a rough draft	• using writing as a tool for thinking: What do I want to say? (writer-oriented) • write down a first version of the text quickly, without demanding perfection in terms of content / style / language • mark inconsistencies / things to be added (incl. literature) for revision (cf. ibid. pp. 68)

Work Phases in Scientific Writing Projects

Work phase	Activity
Revision and gathering feedback	• present knowledge in a way that is comprehensible to others (reader-oriented) • revise the rough draft step by step: 1. content & structure, 2. references & visual data, 3. style & language • get feedback (cf. ibid. pp. 69)
Correcting and finishing the text	• final proofreading: check spelling, grammar, punctuation, layout, indexes, etc. • have your text proofread (cf. ibid. p. 71)
Keep an eye on...during the whole work process	• Time management: What do I want to have done by when? How much time do I plan for what? At what time of day am I most productive? What routines help me start my work? • Reflecting on your writing strategies and working methods and adapting them if necessary (for this purpose, use the writing consultation of SZD) (cf. ibid. pp. 60)

1 Orientation and Planning

Checklist: Checklist Meeting with Supervisors
Method: Clustering
Method: Table for the Delimination of Your Topic
Exercise: Three-Step-Exercise

Checklist Meeting with Supervisors

When contacting your supervisor via e-mail, make sure that you have an email address with your name in it and a concise subject line. Make sure the language in your e-mail is polite and concise (cf. Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina). If you have an attachment, make sure it is not too big and refer to it in your email.

This checklist can help you with planning your writing project. It contains questions which you should consider at the beginning of your writing project and can be used in different ways. For example, you can use the list to formulate questions you should or want to ask your supervisor. You can also use this checklist in a meeting with your supervisor and work through it together.

You may come up with more questions while reading the list so that you have a complete document containing the entire framework for your project.

After each consultation, send a record of your meeting to your supervisor. This will prevent misunderstandings and allows you to refer to your agreements later (cf. Hirsch-Weber and Scherer p. 17).

1. Framework conditions

- ☐ Type of text (seminar paper, essay, report…), characteristics of this type of text
- ☐ Topic
- ☐ Scope of your work; for longer works: the scope of individual chapters (if applicable)
- ☐ Deadline
- ☐ What is the latest date your work can be registered? For final theses: What preparations for your project are you allowed to make before you register?
- ☐ Is it possible to extend the deadline?
- ☐ Supervision: Does your supervisor offer consultations during the working process, feedback on outline, text samples, introduction, exposé etc.? How do they prefer to communicate with you?
- ☐ Semester break: Are there times when your supervisor is unavailable?
- ☐ Will your supervisor comment on your work and discuss it with you if necessary?
- ☐ What additional services can you use (e.g. writing consultation, consultations at SLUB TextLab…)?
- ☐ What university resources can you use for your project (e.g. labs, software…)?
- ☐ For theses, larger research projects and cooperations with companies: Do certain confidentiality agreements apply to you? What is to be considered regarding employment contracts, security instructions or access authorizations?

(cf. Hirsch-Weber and Scherer pp. 17; Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina)

2. Formal requirements

- ☐ Are there any guidelines for the formal design of the paper at the department or institute? If so, where can they be found?
- ☐ Citation style: Are you required to cite in footnotes or parentheses / Harvard reference?

(cf. ibid.)

3. Literature

- ☐ Can your supervisor recommend literature or do they know where you can find support in finding literature?
- ☐ How much secondary literature is expected?
- ☐ Are there texts and authors that should be considered in any case?
- ☐ How current does the research literature need to be?
- ☐ To what extent may online sources be used?

(cf. Writing Center of Europa Universität Viadrina)

4. Academic performance

- ☐ What is the focus of the work in terms of content?
- ☐ Do you have to develop the research question by yourself or is there any help / guidance available?
- ☐ What method is suitable for answering your question?
- ☐ What performance is to be achieved, what skills are to be demonstrated? (if necessary, point out to your supervisor that you are a non-native speaker)
- ☐ What should be the scope of your own opinion / discussion?
- ☐ In what contexts does your supervisor allow the first-person perspective in scientific work? In which scientific formats is the first-person perspective not allowed and why?
- ☐ Regarding linguistic style: What aspects does your supervisor pay special attention to when reviewing / reading scientific papers? What aspects are particularly important? What is not accepted under any circumstances?

(cf. Hirsch-Weber and Scherer p. 17; Writing Center of Europa Universität Viadrina)

Tip: Project outline
Write a short project outline (e.g. based on the *flash exposé*), in which you present your research question, objective, methodology and time schedule. This way, you will be able to see the connections between the aspects and notice where difficulties might arise during the work process. In addition, the project outline is suitable for communicating with your supervisor at various points during the work process on the objective of your work.

Clustering

Clustering is a method for the writing person to get a quick overview of a certain topic or question. An image of words is the result that can activate your creativity and lead to new ideas.

Why do you use a cluster?

Clustering is a non-linear, graphic brainstorming technique (cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 174). All thoughts are allowed and none will be censored. This elicits associations and sets of associations with plenty of different connections. Usually, it gets obvious which subject areas the person writing has the most knowledge about or is most interested in because there will be the most associations (cf. ibid.). A cluster looks a lot like a mind map, but it is not used for structuring your work. It is used for a free and creative collection of ideas (cf. Girgensohn and Sennewald p. 105).

What do you use a cluster for?

- collecting ideas on a topic
- exploring possible sub-topics
- identifying key topics that you want to pursue further
- narrowing down the topic of your work
- getting closer to a research question
- creating a list of keywords for literature research
- preparing a first structure

Instructions

- Set a time frame: 7 –10 minutes (set a timer!)
- Note one central term in the middle of your sheet (core of the cluster). This could also be the topic of your work or a research question.
- Leading away from this core, you write down other terms or phrases spontaneously.
- Encircle them, then connect them to the core via lines.
- You can add new associations to the terms or phrases you wrote down before. If you have other ideas concerning the core, you start a new line leading away from the core.
- It is important to work quickly (only then will the "inner censor" be silenced). All thoughts are allowed! The writing hand should always be moving. If you are lacking ideas at some point, you can just circle one term until you have new ideas.
- If you have several topics to choose from, you can always create more than one cluster to see where you have the most ideas and inspiration.

(cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 174)

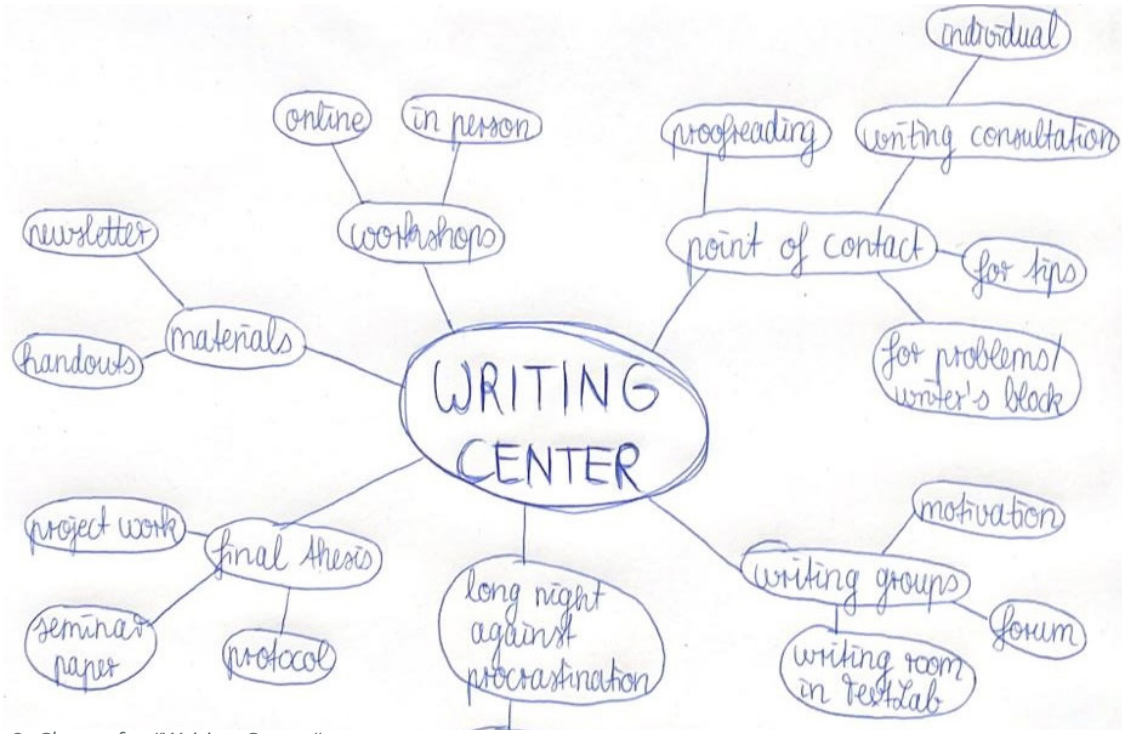


Figure 2. Cluster for "Writing Center"

What else can you use a cluster for?

- Have a look at the cluster: Which aspects are connected to the topic? Which aspects are you interested in? On which aspects do you have the most prior knowledge?
- Which aspects would you like to follow up on?
- If necessary, create another cluster for a certain aspect (follow-up-cluster with this aspect as its core).
- If you chose your research question as the core of your cluster, you can develop a first outline of your work.
- Start your literature research on certain aspects.

Table for the Delimination of your Topic

With this table, you can narrow down your topic according to certain categories and gather ideas for formulating your research question. You can also think about what you already know about certain aspects of the topic, what resources you have at your disposal and what you still need to find out.

A research issue is the central question of your academic work. The research issue is the overarching term that refers to the totality of questions that are investigated or addressed in a scientific paper. It includes not only the central research question, but also supplementary, supporting questions that shed light on the background, methodology or specific aspects of the research topic

A **good research question** is...

- formulated as an actual question.
- clearly identifiable as a question (including sub-questions if necessary).
- an open question (cannot be answered with yes or no).
- short and concise.
- interesting to you as an author.
- relevant to the topic.
- controversial.
- an opportunity to formulate and prove a thesis.
- clearly recognizable in the introduction of your academic paper.

A **bad research question** is...

- easy to answer because you can simply look it up or answer it by quoting a source.
- irrefutable because the answer is obvious or a matter of taste.
- impossible to prove because no data is available / data cannot be collected on this topic.
- too extensive because it is impossible to deal with the most important sources and aspects within the given time or scope of the paper.

Instructions

If you want to better understand what each delimination criteria means, scan the QR code to the extended PDF version of the method and view the sample table there. Then fill out the blank table. You do not have to fill it in in the given order, nor do you have to find something for every aspect. You could also start with the left two columns of the table and fill in the right two columns later.

The following table is based on Grieshammer et al. pp. 176, 182.

Table b: Table for the Delimination of Your Topic

Delimination criteria	**Concrete possibilities of delimination**	**Prior knowledge, material, literature references**	**I want to find out…**
Selected aspect(s)			
Time frame			
Localization (towns, countries, institutions…)			
Establish a focus / Paying particular attention to…			
Groups of people			
Disciplinary aspects and research methods			
Narrowing down sources			
Theoretical approaches / authors			
Establish connections / comparisons			
Emphasize individual case / example			
Highlight something new			
Only provide an overview			
Indicate practical relevance			

Further steps

These questions can help you continue working with the completed delimitation table:

- Which criterion did you write most about?
- Which criterion did you find important, but hard to complete?
- What exactly do you mean by XY?
- What could be the focus of your topic?
- Which delimitation criteria could be combined? What do you think belongs together?

(cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 177)

After filling out the table, you can...

- elaborate on a specific aspect by using a ***cluster*** or ***freewriting***
- draft an initial outline
- develop a preliminary research question
- narrow down your research question further by using the ***three-step method***
- note down keywords for your research
- continuously record your research results in the right half of the table.

(cf. ibid.)

This method supports you in finding ideas in a very structured way. If you want to stimulate your creativity, you could complement it with the methods *clustering* (focus on generating ideas) and *flash exposé* (a kind of freewriting on the writing project).

Three-Step-Exercise

The three-step-exercise is not to be used for generating new ideas. Instead, the method helps you formulate a precise research question and a working hypothesis from vague ideas. To do this, answer the following questions in the given order.

Part 1

For questions 1 to 3, complete the respective sentence parts in such a way that in the end, your three answers form a long, coherent sentence.

1. **State your topic. (What am I writing about?):** I am examining / working on / writing about...

2. **Work your way into your research question (What do I want to know?):** ...because I want to understand / find out / get behind the idea...

3. **Define your objective (Why do I want to know that?):** ...to understand / to determine / to test...

(cf. Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina)

Part 2

1. **Reformulate what you wrote for 3) by finishing the following sentence:** The objective of the paper is...

2. **Reformulate what you wrote for part 1, question 2) as a question.**

3. **Formulate a working hypothesis that answers the question above.**

(cf. ibid.)

2 Collecting and Arranging Materials

Method: Reading Strategies

Method: Critical Reading

Method: Four Column Reading – A Technique to Excerpt Literature

Reading Strategies

Reading strategies (or reading techniques) are the key to reaching your reading goal. To do this, you must first define a goal before you start reading: Why do you want to read this text now? What do you want to find out, note down, or understand? A reading goal could be, for example, to prepare the next session of the seminar in order to participate in the discussion (cf. Lange pp. 24).

Reading strategies differ primarily in how fast you read and how thoroughly you read. There is no one strategy for one particular goal - each strategy must be used depending on the context. The following table is based on Lange pp. 26.

Table c: Reading strategies

Strategy	Goal	Benefits and limitations	Short instruction
Orientational reading	Find out what the text is about; get an overview	Rough knowledge on what the text is about, but no detailed knowledge; gaps in understanding remain	Concentrate on text elements that give you an overview; do not read the text completely!
Scanning	Find out if the text suits the topic; direct search for material or information	Knowing which parts of the text might be important; no knowledge about what is written in the entire text	Determine search criteria for your topic; search for keywords in the text; skim the text; flip through / browse through the text
Thorough reading	Understand the whole text or text passages in all detail	Understanding details; good basis for critical reading; very intense and slow	Read everything slowly and thoroughly; take notes; follow up with reflection / recap
Selective reading	Only read passages relevant to the topic thoroughly	"Island knowledge" is filtered specifically	Define precise search criteria; search first, then read thoroughly; take notes
Analytical reading	A specific aspect of the text is analyzed, e.g. argumentation, formulations...	Knowledge on a certain aspect; little thematic knowledge (meta-level)	Determine a specific aspect you want to analyze; several readings; take notes

Some of the strategies work well in combination: For example, you can use the reading strategy of scanning in order to determine which sections of a text you want to read thoroughly or analyze in depth later.

Reading strategies help you decide which information from the text is important and should be marked or noted down. **You should always write down your reading goal before reading** so that you do not forget it while reading.

Critical Reading

Dealing critically with scientific texts does not mean criticizing them. Rather, it means that you question the arguments, approaches, theories, and thoughts of the authors of the text in a reflective way. This reflection on the text allows you to relate your own thoughts to what you have read and to keep open who is ultimately right (cf. Kruse p. 45).

Critical reading helps:

- to contextualize the text
- to understand the author better
- to follow and question the argumentation
- to evaluate the overall picture of the text

When you actively question the text and its content, it is easier to comprehend the text. This often goes hand in hand with forming your own opinion on the content.

Difficulties in understanding can be starting points for criticism or research - or even the starting point for a research question that you can address in a term paper (cf. Lange p. 88).

In order to **reflect on and question the text**, it is advisable to first think of questions that can guide critical reading. Not all questions can be asked of all scientific texts. Here are some suggestions:

- What is the author's intention? Do you share their view?
- Are there gaps or contradictions in the argumentation of the text?
- Are the facts stated in the text correct? Can the facts be checked?
- Does the content make sense and is it comprehensible? Does it match your empirical knowledge? If not, what might be the reason for this difference?
- Are the theories and models from the text conclusive?
- Are interpretations and conclusions logical and plausible? Do they conform to the rules of the discipline and have they been backed up by material or results?
- On what bases, norms, or values are evaluations or judgments based? Are these clearly stated in the text or only implied? Are the standards of the evaluations and judgments appropriate?
- What is the fundamental position taken in the text and do the argumentation and the material match this position?
- Have other scholars already critically engaged with the text and what conclusions have they drawn?

Critical Reading

Below are some **phrases that can guide a reflection on the text**. This reflection always depends on what your objective in reading is.

- However, it is also conceivable that ...
- An alternative view would be ...
- However, one can ask oneself whether ...
- What remains unclear is ...
- One aspect that was not addressed in the text was ...
- My experience tells me that not only..., but also ...
- It could be argued that ...
- If one assumes that..., then one could...conclude.
- The reasoning of this statement can be doubted if ...
- One could object here ...
- Whether this aspect / argument etc. is generally valid ...
- The author gives the impression that ...
- The question is whether the author has considered ...
- Alternatively, the following causes could be assumed ...
- Looking at the statement in context, it must be stated that ...

Four Column Reading – A Technique to Excerpt Literature

You can use four column reading for excerpting important quotes and definitions from texts, while also allowing you to note down your own thoughts regarding the quotes.

Instructions

In the first two columns, you should put the quote and the corresponding page number, for example. In the third column, you can include your own comments. In the fourth column, you can make notes on which section of your work the chosen passage / quote / paraphrase should be used in (cf. Leibniz Universität Hannover, Zentrale Einrichtung für Qualitätsentwicklung in Studium und Lehre (ZQS) p. 9).

The following table is based on the booklet "Starthilfe Schreiben" of Leibniz University Hannover (cf. ibid.).

Table d: Four Column Reading

Author:

Exact source:

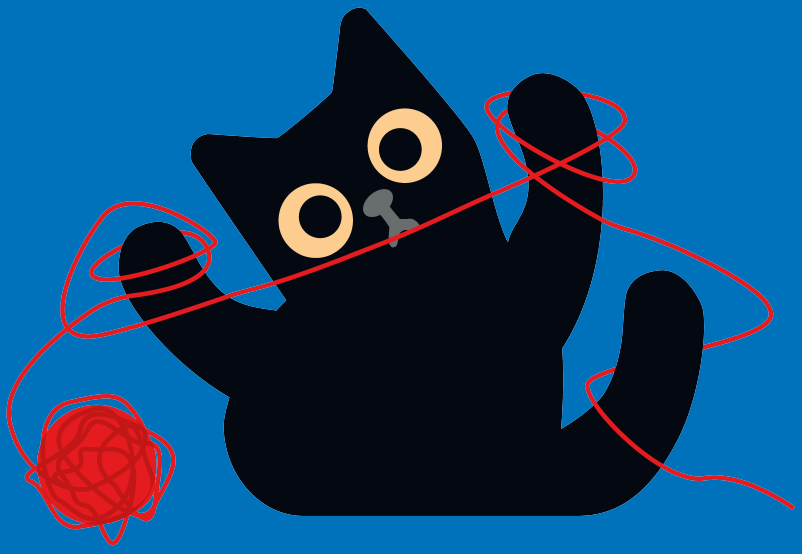
Original text	Page no.	My comments	In my work
paraphrase		My questions regarding the text	Fits aspect x, y, z
quotation		Critical comments, if necessary	Fits in bullet point x, y, z
		What is striking or particular?	Fits in the introduction
		Are there any contradictions to what you have read so far?	Fits in the conclusion

Table e: Example of Four Column Reading

Author: *Iwan-M. D'Aprile, Winfried Siebers*

Exact source: ***Das 18. Jahrhundert. Zeitalter der Aufklärung.*** De Gruyter, 2010.

Original text	Page no.	My comments	In my work
"The distinctive feature of the development in the Enlightenment epoch, however, was the close connection between science and the public, which led to a 'cultural triumph of the natural sciences in the 18th century' (Hochadel 2003, p. 23)."	73	In the 17th century, a scientific revolution took place in which individual scientific subjects emerged. In addition, scientific content now became accessible to the educated middle classes outside of court.	Fits into the introduction to illustrate that comet research was of interest to non-aristocrats in the 18th century also.
"During the Enlightenment, dialogue became a widely used textual genre because it fulfilled three basic communicative requirements of Enlightenment literary practice."	134, 135	Matches with one of the texts I want to analyze: text about comets written in dialogue form	Belongs in the main part; check which of the basic communicative requirements are fulfilled by the text I have analyzed.



3 Developping Text Structures

Method: Structuring your Work with IMRaD
Method: Flash Exposé
Method: The Sticky Note Method to Plan your Writing Project

Structuring your Work with IMRaD

IMRaD is an internationally accepted scheme used to organize and structure scientific papers. When presenting empirical research results in scientific journals, the IMRaD-scheme is the norm (cf. Magilchrist pp. 67).

In an academic context, the scheme is a good basis for the outline of theoretical or practical theses, complemented by a theoretical part after or in the introduction (cf. Hirsch-Weber and Scherer pp. 68).

Using the IMRaD scheme for writing assignments during your studies

- The bullet points of the IMRaD acronym do not have to form separate chapters of the paper, but they should appear in a certain form and in that order. You can combine them into one chapter or divide them into several.
- The IMRaD scheme is implemented differently in different disciplines. Concrete agreements with the supervisor on the content and scope of the introduction as well as the placement of the topic of the paper are indispensable.

The typical IMRaD scheme

INTRODUCTION: Why?

- Why is this study important?
- Why are the topic and the results relevant?
- What was the aim of the study?
- What were the research question(s) and / or hypotheses?
- What research does already exist on this topic?

METHODS: How?

- What material was needed?
- What methods were used to generate and analyze the data?

RESULTS: What?

- What is the answer to the research question?
- What data were generated? Do they support the hypotheses?

and

DISCUSSION: What does this mean?

- What do the results mean?
- How can the results be interpreted?
- What conclusions can be drawn?
- To what larger field are the findings relevant?
- What implications can be derived for further research, theory, or practice?

IMRaD in practice

- The introduction part of the IMRaD scheme must be complemented by a theoretical part (basics, theoretical aspects etc.) for practical and theoretical student work.
- As a rule, the IMRaD scheme must be complemented by the section "summary and outlook" at the end of the student work.
- If the text is to be preceded by an abstract, this should also follow the structure of the IMRaD scheme. An abstract is no longer than 250-500 words. The focus of the abstract are the work's results and the discussion (cf. Wu pp. 1345).

Abstract: First impression for the reader

- What is the objective of the work / study?
- What is the disciplinary context of the work? (Context and background of the study)
- What methods were used?
- What are the main findings of the study?
- What is the work's contribution to the field?

(cf. Bitchener pp. 10)

Conclusion / summary and outlook

- What were the objective (e.g., restating the research question / hypotheses) and the main methodological features of the study?
- What are the main findings of the study?
- What is the contribution of the study to the state of research?
- What recommendations for further research and, if applicable, practical application(s) can be derived from the study?

(cf. ibid. p. 198)

Flash Exposé

The flash exposé is a method of writing freely for a predefined period of time. You do not look at your notes while writing the flash exposé. Writing under time pressure can help silencing your "inner critic". This is important as the flash exposé is not about completeness of content or perfect wording, but rather about encouraging you to continue your thought process. At the same time, the method is a good basis for writing the actual exposé that you would like to submit to your supervisor(s).

The flash exposé is suitable for...

- getting an overview of what you still need to clarify for your writing project to succeed.
- preparing and systematizing your collection of material (finding keywords for the topics / aspects of the project; sorting a bibliography by topic, background topics, state of research, research methods) (cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 185).
- drafting an outline (cf. ibid.).
- developing a work plan (cf. ibid.).
- deciding (pragmatically) for a topic (What do I already know most about?).
- subsequently writing a detailed, reader-oriented exposé that can be handed to your supervisor.

Instructions

- Set yourself a time limit (approx. 20 minutes) and start writing freely without looking at your notes.
- Write in complete sentences and as quickly as possible (cf. ibid. p. 184).
- You write only for yourself (writer-oriented).
- It is not necessary to have perfect wording.
- If you cannot answer one question, jump to the next one.

Flash Exposé

Answer the following questions about your work as quickly as possible:

- Topic / narrowing down the topic: What is the focus of your work? What should your work be about?
- Question / thesis / working hypothesis: What do you want to find out, show or test? What aspects are particularly interesting?
- Goals / personal interest: What should be the result of your work? Why is this result important / interesting / relevant? What do you want to achieve?
- Methodology: How are you going to proceed? What methods are you going to use? Why are these methods suitable for your project?
- Material: What exactly are you going to analyze? Do you want to analyze specific empirical data, primary texts, sources, or phenomena? What are the selection criteria for your material? What is the scope of your material? What literature are you going to use? Do you already have all of the material?
- Problem statement / reference to existing literature or research: To what state of research do you connect your paper? Is there a gap or specific problem in research?
- Resources: What methods, literature, workshops, or counselling services do you want to use?
- Timeline: What milestones have you set for yourself? By when do you want to have finished your work?

(cf. ibid.)

The Sticky Note Method to Plan your Writing Project

The sticky note method allows you to collect your ideas and work steps in an uncomplicated way, and sort them in a flexible way. You can use it, for example, to work out the outline structure of your writing project or of a single chapter. Try this method if you are a visual type and like to literally take things in your hands.

Plans can help you to keep the overall overview and help you feel safe in the way you are working. The following steps will guide you through the process of planning a structure for your complex writing project by separating the whole task into a cluster of smaller steps. This way, you will no longer face the huge mountain of work, but rather approach your project step-by-step.

Instruction to Brainstorm

Step 1:

Write down all the central ideas or bullet points that spontaneously come to mind on one sticky note each. Alternatively, you can also use non-adhesive notes.

Step 2:

Now try to put your sticky notes with ideas into a hierarchical structure or logical order. Proceed from the general to the specific. Also, use the conventions of your discipline as a guide when designing an outline.

Step 3:

Look at the structure you have designed or the collection of ideas. Now fine-tune and write down more ideas or structural elements on sticky notes that fit the ones you have already written down. Assign your new notes to your old ones.

Step 4:

Think about the order in which you want to approach the ideas or bullet points. Where do you still need to do research? Which chapters do you want to write first or last? Which ones do you need the most time for?

Step 5:

Now use your collection of sticky notes to develop either a structured mind-map or an outline for your writing project (a chapter, a paragraph...).

Step 6:

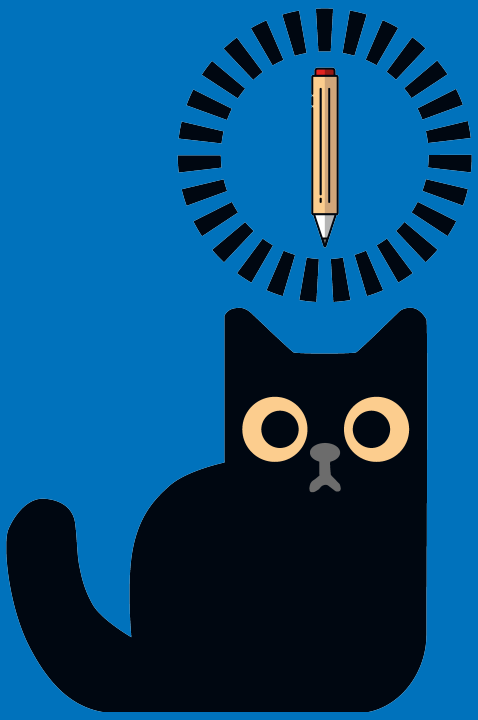
Check in a conversation with a feedback person: Is my outline or collection of ideas logical and stringent? Is anything missing? Is anything superfluous?

Step 7:

Adjust your outline or collection of ideas if necessary. Researching and writing may give you a new perspective. However, be careful not to lose sight of the focus of your work.

Tip: Hang your collection of ideas or outline in a visible place so that you can always see it.

Another tip: The sticky note method is not only suitable for creating an outline, but also for setting up a schedule for your writing project (c.f. Fröhlich et al. pp. 72). Scan the QR code to the extended PDF version of the method for the comprehensive instructions.



4 Producing Text (“Rough Draft“)

Method: Thread of Thought and Text Path – Planning Global and Fine Text Structures

Method: Scientific Language

Method: Freewriting

Method: Argumentation in Scientific Texts

Thread of Thought and Text Path

The method thread of thought helps you work out a coherent outline and makes it easier for you to start writing your draft version. If you transfer the method to the paragraph level, it can reduce writer's inhibition, make it easier to formulate your text and give it a clear, reader-friendly structure (cf. Scheuermann 2016, pp. 82).

Creating global text structures: spinning a thread of thought

You have clearly defined your research question, collected material, delved into the topic, and developed a preliminary structure. In order to then expand the outline and begin with the raw text, the writing-thinking-technique thread of thought can help you. Using this technique, you can keep an eye on the argumentative structure and develop it while writing. Based on the research question, the method helps you answer the following questions:

- Which aspects of the content should / must be clarified in which chapters so that I can answer my question at the end?
- Do the aspects suggest a certain order of chapters?

Instruction: thread of thought

1. Have your draft structure and some sheets of paper ready.
2. This exercise can be done in a handwritten form (so you do not lose focus while typing on the computer). To start with this exercise, write the headings of your outline on different pages and leave space for 2-3 sentences between the headings (cf. Scheuermann 2011, p. 96).
3. Now write about three sentences for each heading (e.g.: In this chapter, I want to demonstrate...). These three sentences contain the main statements for each heading. Make sure to stay in the flow of writing and write down what comes to mind first. If information is missing or content is still unclear, formulate assumptions, and mark those as assumptions. It is just important that you write a text without blanks "in one go" (20 - 30 minutes) (cf. ibid.).
4. Now you can use your thread of thought for orientation. (e.g. by pinning it above your desk) (cf. ibid.).

How can the thread of thought be used?

- You gain an overview of your writing project early on – a more detailed overview than you would have with an outline only.
- You recognize at which points your outline may not correspond to your argumentation, where it needs to be streamlined, adapted, or expanded.
- You already formulate central trains of thought and thus make it easier for yourself to write the raw text.

- You get the good feeling of already having something to say / write about each key point. At the same time, you know for which key points you should do more research.
- You can always consult the formulated thread to check whether you wrote yourself into a dead end, are getting off topic, if you are stuck, or to recall earlier arguments.

(cf. ibid. p. 97)

Fine text structures: work out your text path

The same principle as with the thread of thought method can also be applied on a smaller level, for individual chapters or paragraphs, for example.

Instructions: text path

1. On a sheet of paper, first write down a heading for the section you want to plan and formulate later. Divide the sheet into two columns (cf. Scheuermann 2016, p. 83).
2. In the left column, put the structural elements or the aspects of content that your text section should consist of, one below the other. Leave enough space between the single key words (cf. ibid.).
3. As soon as you have collected all the structural elements, write down key points about the corresponding content in the right column next to each structural element. You can add your own graphic system to these notes for more clarity (cf. ibid.).

Table f: Structure of argumentation

Thesis	**Health care workers are more at risk of a burn-out**
Argument 1	Often work in shifts
Argument 2	High emotional and physical stress
Example	Data from study xy

By the way: The method has advantages for every type of writer. If you like to just "write away", you will get to know a new approach. If you are more of a planning type, you can gain more confidence and expand your existing skills (cf. ibid. pp. 82). You can find out which type of writer you are by taking the *writing types test*, for example.

Scientific Language

Scientific texts serve the purpose of communication. They communicate newly generated knowledge to others (e.g. in the case of a seminar paper, newly generated knowledge is communicated to the supervisor). How do you communicate your newly generated knowledge to others? This fundamental question serves as the basis for the characteristics of scientific language.

Characteristics of scientific language

The language used in scientific texts is very different from everyday language use. Lange and Wiethoff have described scientific language as an instrument to represent matters unambiguously, objectively, precisely, and economically (cf. p. 295). Lieberknecht and May (cf. p. 11) have formulated the following three maxims of scientificity, which can also be seen as basic characteristics of scientific language:

Table g: Characteristics of scientific language

Objectivity / neutrality	Neutrality means a representation free of evaluations, manipulative intent or personal preferences. Objectivity means that different, even contrary positions are taken into account in the work and that things are not depicted in a one-sided way.
Universality / contextual independence	This aspect refers to the fact that scientific statements must be comprehensible and verifiable regardless of their cultural, historical and political context of origin.
Exactness / unambiguity	This aspect refers to the fact that a text in itself must be must be comprehensible (no questions come up while reading). Unambiguity is achieved if statements are formulated as clearly, precisely and unambiguously as possible.

Approaches

How can these aspects be taken into account throughout the text production process? The most important tip is to take your time. Language is complex and rules for a certain use of language is something you learn on an ongoing basis. Here are three long-term strategies:

Analyze while reading

Specifically analyze the use of language in scientific texts:

- How are things being presented?
- What is not used at all in terms of language (e.g. maybe the first-person perspective)?
- What stylistic characteristics can you discern?

Divide the writing process into (at least) two stages

When writing, separate the content level from the level of verbal communication, e.g. by first writing in your own words (writing-thinking). This way, you can focus separately on the development of your argumentation and only in a second step on the requirements of scientific language use.

Then, revise the text by considering the following questions:

- Does my text conform to the conventions of my discipline?
- Is my text comprehensible for readers?
- Is the language neutral, precise and unambiguous?

Get feedback

Get regular text feedback during your writing process. This will help you gradually improve your ability to assess your own text in terms of language and structure. Specific questions you can ask a person giving feedback include:

- Are there passages where something is claimed that needs scientific evidence?
- Are there passages in which it is unclear whose opinion or research results are stated?
- Is the sentence structure comprehensible, incomprehensible, too complex, too simple, too long, too short?
- Could transitions be added in between chapters or paragraphs?

For comprehensive tips on how and from whom to get text feedback, see our handout *Constructive Feedback*.

Do's & Don'ts

In addition to the long-term strategies for internalizing the characteristic features of scientific language, here are some examples of the concrete use of scientific language:

Table h: Do's and Don'ts in scientific language

	Don't	**Do**
Filler words	Roman Jakobson is, **in a way**, a central figure of linguistic structuralism.	Roman Jakobson is a central figure of linguistic structuralism.
Colloquial language	Statistical data are not always evaluated **in a clever way**.	Statistical data are not always interpreted **objectively and carefully**.
Vague formulations	The values of the other measurement series were **a bit higher**.	The values of the second measurement series **showed an increase of 2%**.
Exaggerations	Edmond Halley is the **most important astronomer**.	Edmond Halley's **contribution is, inter alia, significant because his methodology helped proof the periodicity of a comet for the first time.**
Subjective statements	In his **impressive work**, Adam Smith addresses, among other things, issues of the free market and the division of labor.	In his **work, which had a lasting impact on modern economics**, Adam Smith addresses, among other things, issues of the free market and the division of labor.

Freewriting

Freewriting is a brainstorming technique and the basic technique for "thinking on paper". You write down your thoughts as quickly and uncensored as possible.

What is freewriting?

Many writers censor their thoughts or formulations even before or while writing them down or they check and correct everything they wrote instantly. This behaviour quickly leads to blocked thoughts or to the refusal of ideas that could have been important. Freewriting offers the possibility to think and write simultaneously. This way, the "inner critic" is silenced, and you can write down everything that comes to mind. The result is a text in your own words containing new ideas, interesting trains of thought as well as apt formulations that can be used while further working on the writing project.

What is freewriting good for?

- Starting point for a period of writing or to find your way into the flow of writing (the method can be integrated as a set part in your writing routine, for example)
- Coping with difficult emotions (e.g. a conflict occupying your thoughts) (cf. Girgensohn and Sennewald p. 104)
- Getting rid of unrelated thoughts (e.g. your other plans for the day ahead)
- Developing or investigating ideas (e.g.: Do I really want to write about this? Do I have any other ideas?)
- Clarifying your own goals (e.g.: What do I want to show with this paragraph?)
- Getting clarity on what you have read (e.g.: What are the most important points for my work? What does the author want to tell us here?)
- Reflecting on what a chapter should contain and how it should be structured (e.g.: First of all, I would like to say that...; followed by a paragraph on...; the transition must include...)
- Planning your writing project (e.g.: What do I still need to clarify for myself? Are there better ways to structure my day? How can I make better progress?)
- As a basis to a draft structure of your writing project

Open freewriting and focused freewriting

In open freewriting, you write completely freely. In focused freewriting, you focus on a specific topic or writing assignment.

Open freewriting is ideal for processing emotions, for example, while focused freewriting can be used to reflect on your writing project.

Freewriting

Instructions

- Set a time limit: 5 – 10 minutes (Set a timer!)
- When doing focused freewriting, set a topic beforehand and write it down as a heading. When doing open freewriting, just start writing.
- Write down spontaneously what comes to mind – there is no right or wrong, nothing is unimportant or nonsensical. Write full sentences (cf. ibid.).
- Do not look back on what you have already written and do not cross out anything.
- Linguistic correctness, grammar and punctuation are not important here (cf. ibid.). Think: I am talking to a friend (write in your own words).
- Do not stop writing during the set time! As soon as your writing flow stops, write something like "What else? What else?" The writing hand should always be moving (cf. ibid.)!

What else can you do with freewriting?

- Read your text again and mark things you think are interesting.
- Do you notice any new ideas? Are there any interesting aspects? Is anything left unclear?
- Looking at your text, can you deduce which step to take next?
- Which phrasings or paragraphs can you use further?
- Can headings for an outline be derived from the text you have written?

Format examples for open freewriting

- Type your text on a computer and set the font color to white. This way, you cannot keep correcting your text.
- Start writing with pen and paper, just as with a diary.

Format examples for focused freewriting

- "Letter to a friend" (As you know, I am currently working on my bachelor's thesis. I am stuck on a particular problem and I wanted to tell you about it...)
- "Dialogue with the inner critic" (Me: I could start with explaining what an open freewriting is; critic: Are you sure you do not want to start off with the benefits? The advantages are...)
- "My desk reports" (Today, Anna had trouble focusing again, I think it is because of...; Maybe she should try making her desk more comfortable or...)
- "Reflection on my writing project" (What did I succeed at today? What do I want to keep working on? What other ideas do I have?)

Argumentation in Scientific Texts

All scientific texts have an argumentative structure. Arguments lead to answering your research question, since you can use them to prove, support, test, and relate statements. In addition, arguments are also tools for deliberately developing a structure.

Components of argumentation

The components of argumentation in scientific texts become clear in the balance model (Fig. 3) by Esselborn-Krumbiegel (cf. pp. 104). According to this model, an argumentation always consists of hypotheses (pan 1), which must be proven by scientific evidence (pan 2) - and thus become theses. Hypotheses can be formed, for example, by interpretation, analysis, comparison, as well as empirical study and evaluation. However, their derivation must always satisfy the criteria of scientificity.

The task of the writer is to consider which statements (hypotheses) should be made and how they can be proven. The basis here is the material base (pedestal) and the methodical processing of the material (support beam). The material can be, for example, a text corpus, data, sources or research literature. The goal of methodically processing the material is to generate evidence for your hypotheses.

To prevent the argumentation from becoming unbalanced, the two pans "hypotheses" and "evidence" must be equally filled.

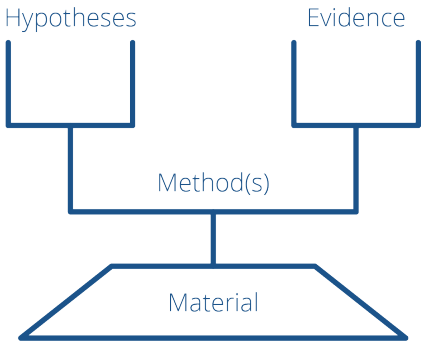


Figure 3. Balance model - own illustration based on Esselborn-Krumbiegel p. 105

Patterns of argumentation

For arguments to fulfill their purpose, it is essential to structure them. In scientific contexts, the following three argumentation patterns are frequently used: the **chain** (Fig. 4), the **rhombus** (Fig. 5), and the **balance** (Fig. 6). They can provide guidance to writers in developing a structure.

Figure 4. Chain

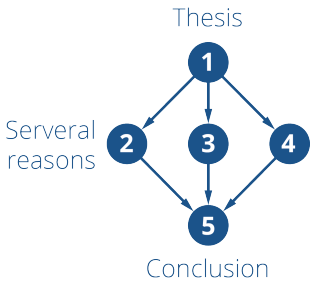


Figure 5. Rhombus

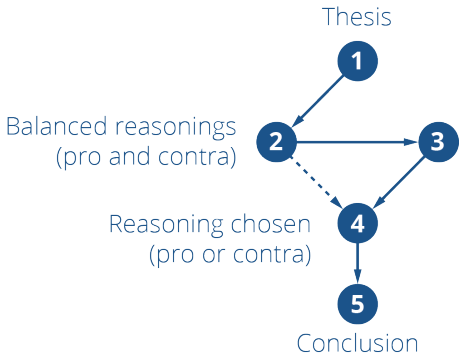


Figure 6. Balance

Figure 4. to 6.: Own illustrations based on the handout "Argumentation Patterns" by the Writing Center of Goethe University Frankfurt

Forms of argumentation

Arguments exist in different forms. The forms of argumentation relevant for science and meeting scientific standards include **argumentum fortiori, argumentum a priori and argumentum a posteriori.** Table i shows an overview based on Knill in Obermaier pp. 230.

Table i: Forms of argumentation

Form of argumentation	Meaning	Example
Argumentum fortiori	Proof by an already proven statement	Various studies have proven that exercise increases physical endurance.
Argumentum a priori	Proof by logical reasons	Since exercise stimulates the cardiovascular system, endurance increases in regular exercisers.
Argumentum a posteriori	Proof by reasons derived from experience	Everyone notices how endurance decreases when not having exercised in a long time.

5 Revising Text and Getting Feedback

Method: Text Revision
Checklist: Revising the Structure of your Academic Work
Method: Constructive Feedback:
Receiving and Giving Text Feedback

Text Revision

Text revision is the systematic, step-by-step change of your text. It is more than correcting errors. The aim of revising your text is to improve the text in terms of content, structure and language. The focus shifts from textualizing information to optimizing the quality and comprehensibility of the text.

The revision of your text is a separate work step from writing your rough draft as well as the final correction of your text.

Higher Order Concerns (HOC) and Later Order Concerns (LOC)

It is useful to revise a text several times or in several stages. Pay attention to one of the following aspects during each revision loop:

1. Check whether the content is correct and scientifically correct.
2. Check the structure of the text (logical connections and structure).
3. Revise language and style with regard to reader-friendliness.
4. Correct the text's surface (grammar, spelling, formal requirements, layout...).

(cf. Girgensohn and Sennewald pp. 91, 112)

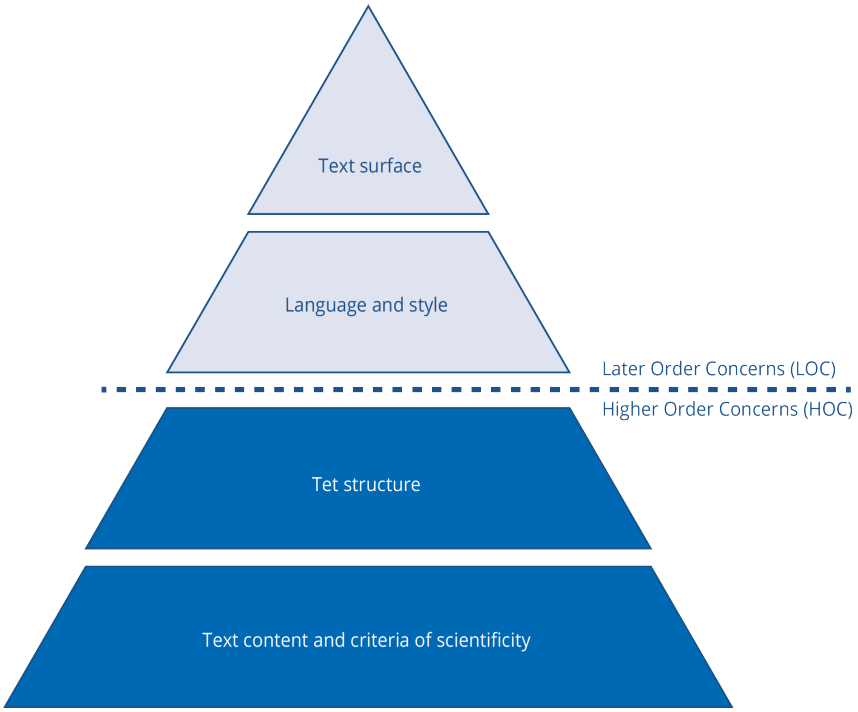


Figure 7. Higher Order Concerns und Later Order Concerns

As the figure illustrates well, HOC form the basis of your text. **If you focus on LOC first, you risk wasting your effort.** For example, a paragraph that has been revised in terms of language might be scrapped later on because it does not fit the text in terms of content.

Guiding questions for the revision of Higher Order Concerns

- Is all of the content relevant? Where is information missing?
- Are the criteria for scientificity being met?
- Are my citations correct?
- Is my argumentation complete, consistent, and free of contradictions?
- Does the sequence of information follow a logical order or are there leaps of thought in the text?
- Is there a red thread running through the text (both in the outline and in the structure of individual chapters)?
- Do I use appropriate linguistic devices to transition between individual thoughts?

Tip: For even more advice on revising Higher Order Concerns, see our *Checklist for Revising the Structure of your Academic Work*.

Revision strategies

Just like writing texts, revising texts is an individual process. Both processes of writing and revising a text need to be coordinated.

Here are a few strategies for expanding your existing approach to text revision:

- Plan whether you would prefer to revise the entire text several times in total, or reserve time slots in parallel to writing your rough draft to revise parts of the text that have already been written.
- Let the text "sit" for a while before revising it, as to prevent operational blindness.
- Change the medium when revising your text (e.g. print out your text, change font color and size...).
- Read the text aloud or have it read aloud.
- Develop color and correction character codes before revising.
- Ask for ***feedback***, preferably several times and from several different people! Suitable persons for this are people from outside the discipline, fellow students, lecturers, and tutors of the Writing Center.

Checklist Revising the Structure of your Academic Work

When revising your academic work, it is useful to start with content and structure. Only then can you work on language and style as well as grammar and orthography. This way, you split your revision into two levels. In professional literature, these two levels are called "Higher Order Concerns" (HOC) and "Later Order Concerns" (LOC).

1. Check for the whole work (including introduction and conclusion)

- ☐ My research question / main hypothesis is clear.
- ☐ My research question / main hypothesis is stated in the introduction.
- ☐ My research question / main hypothesis is stated in the conclusion.

(cf. Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina)

2. Check the chronology of chapters (structure)

- ☐ There is a logical connection from each chapter to the research question / main hypothesis.
- ☐ The chapters follow a logical order so that there is a common thread between them.
- ☐ The headings for each chapter are informative.

(cf. ibid.)

3. Check each chapter for logical structure (sub-chapters, paragraphs)

- ☐ The topic and the main hypothesis are presented clearly.
- ☐ Sub-chapters and paragraphs follow a logical order.
- ☐ Single sub-chapters are not superfluous.
- ☐ Transitions are consistent and conclusive.
- ☐ There are no transitions missing in between sub-chapters or paragraphs.

(cf. ibid.)

4. Check for each paragraph

- ☐ The topic and the main hypothesis are presented clearly.
- ☐ The main hypothesis is formulated clearly.
- ☐ The main hypothesis is placed in a central position.

(cf. ibid.)

5. Check for the order of paragraphs

- ☐ For each argument or paragraph, their function within the whole text is clear.
- ☐ No mental steps or arguments are missing.
- ☐ There are no superfluous thoughts or arguments.
- ☐ The order of arguments or paragraphs is plausible.

(cf. ibid.)

6. Check within each paragraph

- ☐ The sentences follow a structure: Statements and arguments follow a logical order.

(cf. ibid.)

Constructive Feedback

Get feedback on content and structure first, then on language aspects. The reason is that proofreading your text too soon is like sanding pieces of wood before you know which pieces you need to build the table (L. L. Clark).

Receiving feedback

To get helpful feedback, discuss the following aspects with the person you are asking for feedback:

- What exactly do you want to get feedback on? Clearly formulate your request (see checklist for feedback on texts) (cf. Frank et al. pp. 98).
- Take some workload off the person giving you feedback by not asking for feedback on all the text levels listed in the checklist (1 - 8) at the same time. Rather set a focus for the feedback (cf. ibid.).
- The person should concentrate on this focus when reading your text (cf. ibid.).

Adopt the following inner attitude when receiving feedback:

- First listen, do not justify yourself. Only ask as to clarify something (cf. ibid. p. 101).
- Accept feedback and take notes (cf. ibid. p. 100).
- Adopt the following inner attitude:
    - “Thank you, I will think about it.“ (ibid.).
    - I am not stupid; it is just that the text is not yet fully developed (cf. ibid.).
    - The role of the person giving feedback is to support me in developing the text and improving it (cf. ibid.).

Giving feedback

To give friendly, approving, and encouraging feedback, pay attention to the following aspects:

- Consciously notice and mention positive things first (cf. ibid. p. 101), e.g. pointing out what has been well done.
- Formulate feedback subjectively from the point of view of an interested reader (cf. ibid.):
    - I noticed...
    - I did not quite understand...
    - To me, it seems like you wanted to say... here, but it is not quite clear to me.
    - In this passage / sentence, I could not follow as a reader:
    - I would suggest the following...
- When giving feedback, imagine how the other person takes the feedback. Ask yourself: How would I receive this feedback?
- Address specific aspects of the text (cf. ibid.). Find exemplary text passages to show what could be improved.
- Wait until the person receiving your feedback has found the section of the text that you are talking about.

When giving feedback on linguistic aspects such as sentence structure, it helps to observe yourself while reading: Where do I stumble? Which sentence do I have to read five times before I can understand it?

You do not always need to suggest changes to the text.

Describing difficulties in understanding or confusion is often already very helpful (cf. ibid. p. 100).

Checklist for feedback on texts

1. Overall impression of the text

- ☐ What is particularly well done and why?
- ☐ What effect does the text have on the reader? Is it reader-friendly?

(cf. Writing Center of TU Darmstadt p. 1)

2. Research question

- ☐ Is the research question (the objective) clear? Is it discernible throughout the entire text?

3. Content

- ☐ Are statements unclear or misleading?
- ☐ Where is information missing?
- ☐ Are there contradictions in the text?
- ☐ Where could the text be clarified through descriptions, case studies or comparisons?
- ☐ Do statements repeat themselves? Does anything distract from the answer to the research question and is therefore superfluous?

(cf. Writing Center of Europa Universität Viadrina)

4. Structure

- ☐ Is the work structured as presented in the introduction?
- ☐ Is the research question addressed and answered in the conclusion?
- ☐ Are the characteristics of the different sections of the text taken into account (e.g. are all the necessary components of an introduction present)?
- ☐ Is there a red thread in the text (recognizable argumentative structure)?
- ☐ Are there leaps of thought?
- ☐ Is the division of the chapters and sections logically comprehensible? Could more headings structure the text more clearly?
- ☐ Could transitions between chapters or individual sections be added?
- ☐ Could a list or table make the text more comprehensible?

(cf. ibid.)

5. Scientific standards

- ☐ Where is evidence missing?
- ☐ Where is it unclear whose statement or research result is being reproduced? (“Who is speaking?“)
- ☐ Are quotations meaningfully integrated into the text?
- ☐ Are the central terms used in the text being defined?
- ☐ Are abbreviations explained the first time they are used?

(cf. ibid.)

6. Formulations and style

- ☐ Are the sentences comprehensible or too complicated, too convoluted, too long, too short, too simple?
- ☐ Is there a varied use of language or is it rather repetitive (e.g. variations in sentence patterns, choice of words)?
- ☐ Does the style of language fit the group of readers (e.g. too complicated, too crude, too colloquial)?

(cf. Writing Center of TU Darmstadt p. 2)

7. Linguistic correctness

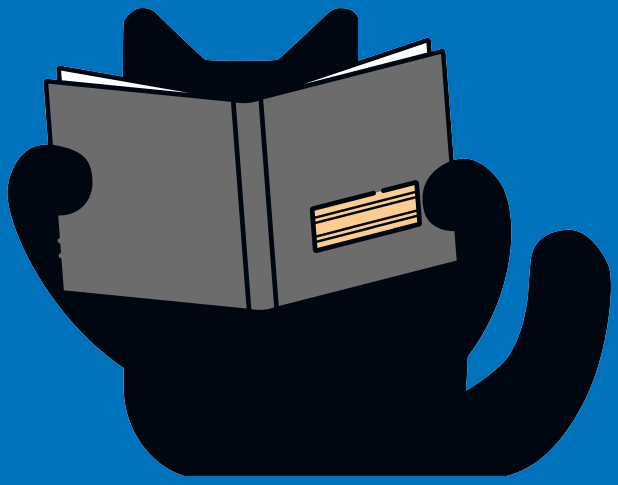
- ☐ Are there grammatical errors in the text, e.g., errors in the sentence (sentence position, sentence connections), e.g., errors in single words (singular / plural, case, tense)?
- ☐ Is the punctuation correct (especially commas)?
- ☐ Is the spelling correct (capitalization, hyphenation, foreign words...)?

(cf. ibid.)

8. Formal characteristics

- ☐ Is the font (type face, font size) reader-friendly? (cf. ibid.)
- ☐ Is the layout appealing? (cf. ibid.)
- ☐ Have the formal requirements of the supervisor been implemented?

Tip: This checklist can also be used for *revising the writing project*.



6 Final Corrections

Checklist: Formal Correctness, Orthography and Grammar

Formal Correctness, Orthography and Grammar

After working on the language and style of your text (Higher Order Concerns / HOC), you can now make sure your text is formally correct, including the spelling and grammar of your work (Later Order Concerns / LOC).

1. Quotes

☐ Quotes are included in the text in a meaningful way; they are not simply inserted in the text but get introduced and are integrated in the text.

☐ It is clear why the quote is being used in this place. For example:

- They are thoughts or ideas from a third person.
- It is a fundamental definition.
- A certain position is being presented.
- It is made clear what others have to say about the topic.
- The research subject (e.g. extracts from an interview) is being included.

(cf. Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina)

2. Scientific illustrations

☐ So-called scientific illustrations (figures, illustrations, tables, diagrams, formulas) are included in the text in a reasonable way. The illustrations are not simply put there, but they are being introduced and explained.

☐ The function of the scientific illustration is made clear. For example:

- It is a simplification of reality (e.g. technical drawings, organization charts).
- Information is presented in a clear structure (e.g. in a table).
- An abstract connection or a process is being concretized (e.g. in a flow chart or a graph).
- Associations are being provoked (e.g. via a picture).

(cf. ibid.)

3. Grammar

- ☐ Collocations are used correctly.
- ☐ Enumerations within a sentence go together and are grammatically congruent.
- ☐ Sentences are formed correctly, sentence beginnings match sentence endings.
- ☐ Proper tenses are used throughout the text (e.g. no switching between past tenses and present tense).

(cf. ibid.)

4. Formal uniformity

- ☐ The chosen citation style is used consistently and correctly.
- ☐ Authors are always quoted either with or without their first name(s).
- ☐ Quotes are always either put in footnotes or in brackets.

(cf. ibid.)

5. Orthography, punctuation, and careless mistakes

- ☐ I checked my text at least once with an orthography and spelling program on my computer.
- ☐ I read the text out loud to find mistakes that could have happened by moving too many text passages.
- ☐ I especially checked the use of commas in my text.

(cf. ibid.)

7 Time and Self-Management

Method: Writing Types: Structure Followers and Structure Creators

Method: Writing Habits

Method: Setting Goals with the SMART Method

Method: Planning Your Writing Time with the Tomato Technique

Writing Types: Structure Followers and Structure Creators

Various didacticians of writing distinguish between two poles of writers: “planners“ (structure-following) and “on-he-fly writers“ (structure-creating) (cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 30).

Both types of writing are theoretical models that do not exist in pure form. However, they are useful for identifying your individual strengths and weaknesses and optimizing your writing process. Neither of the two types pursues an inherently “better“ or “worse“ writing strategy.

Writing type: planner (structure-following)

You are more of a planner if you...

- develop an outline and text structures before writing.
- actually stick closely to the text structure you planned.
- feel like you can only start writing once you have gathered all the relevant information.

(cf. ibid. pp. 34)

Strengths of structure-following writing include:

- low risk of going off topic
- good organization; time schedules can usually be met
- the structural concept makes it possible to continue writing different chapters flexibly
- the text revision process might be shorter

(cf. ibid.)

Weaknesses of structure-following writing and counter-strategies

Table j: Weaknesses of structure-following writing and counter-strategies

Weaknesses of structure-followers	Counter-strategy
Perfectionism, risk of writer's block	Integrate techniques of associative writing, e.g. *freewriting*
Text is being produced rather slowly	
Difficulty incorporating new ideas into the text; difficulty writing when the structure of the text is still unclear	Regularly note and reflect on new ideas in a writing journal; combine associative and organizing techniques, e.g. *cluster* & *mind-map*

Writing type: on-the-fly writer (structure-creating)

You are more of an "on-the-fly writer" if you...

- produce running text quickly, even in the early stages of your writing project.
- often develop your ideas and text structure while writing.
- tend to tackle many new topics and realize where you still need to do research while writing.

(cf. ibid. pp. 32)

Strengths of structure-creating writing include:

- high flexibility during the writing process; openness to new ideas
- text production is possible even under time pressure
- no fear of the blank page
- tendency to illuminate topics from many different angles

(cf. ibid.)

Weaknesses of structure-creating writing and counter-strategies

Table k: Weaknesses of structure-creating writing and counter-strategies

Weaknesses of structure-creators	Counter-strategy
Danger of straying from the topic or investing too much time in further research	Before writing or researching, decide which idea you want to focus on; set max. number of resources; note down separately any ideas that come to mind but do not fit this focus idea; use techniques such as reverse outlining to check the structure of the text and modify it if necessary
Raw text needs a lot of revision	Plan systematic revision loops at an early stage, search for feedback partners
Often under time pressure as the deadline approaches	

Writing Habits

Habitual actions are easier for us than those for which you have to make a conscious decision. Which means: With regular working and writing habits, you make it easier for yourself to start working and writing every day and to stick with it in the long run. Motivational lows then have less of a negative effect.

In the following, you will find some suggestions to create good working and writing habits as well as to optimize already existing habits.

Choosing and setting up your workspace

A fixed workspace helps you get into "work mode" quickly. The set-up of your workspace can influence your productivity positively or negatively. Ask yourself:

- What workspaces are available to me?
- What distracts me and what helps me focus?
- What do I need to feel comfortable?
- Could I redesign my workspace with little effort so that it suits my needs more?

(cf. Wolfsberger pp. 165; Wymann pp. 67)

Establishing regular writing times

Set aside a fixed time each day (e.g. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) to work exclusively on your writing project. Consider the following questions:

- What times of day are available to me?
- When am I most productive?
- What tasks could I do at times of day when I am less focused?

(cf. Wymann pp. 23)

Choosing a writing ritual to start your writing time

Always start your working time with the same "ritual" (e.g. make a cup of tea or coffee, listen to a certain piece of music, clean up your desk, ...). Short writing exercises such as ***freewriting*** are also useful as rituals.

Setting daily goals

Before you start your writing time, determine what you want to accomplish that day and write down these goals. You might want to include setting goals in your daily writing ritual (cf. ibid. pp. 43).

Taking breaks

Taking breaks makes you more productive. It is best to schedule breaks at times of day when your energy is low, e.g. after lunch. In addition to longer breaks, it is also advisable to regularly take short breaks to relax, for example taking a 5-minute break every 25 minutes (cf. Nöteberg pp. 55). During the short breaks, you could:

- stretch and move around
- air the room
- drink something, make coffee or tea
- close your eyes and take deep breaths

Avoid activities that expose your brain to new and exciting information, e.g. using social media, watching videos, reading the news (cf. ibid.).

Reflecting on your writing / work day

Finish your workday with a short (written) reflection. Ask yourself:

- What went well today?
- What would I like to maintain?
- What am I unhappy with?
- What can I change?

Planning your writing process and monitoring progress

Create medium- and long-term schedules. Take time regularly (e.g. once a week) to track your progress and adjust your plan if necessary.

Now reflect on your own work and writing habits:

- What beneficial habits do you already have?
- What habits or behaviors make it harder for you to get started each day? What habits or behaviors hinder your productivity?
- What habit or writing ritual could help you get started and increase your productivity?

Create your own plan

You can use the following table to work out your future work and writing habits. We recommend that you consult this plan regularly and adjust it if necessary.

Table l: My writing habits

Planning questions	What I plan to do
What kind of workspace works best for me? How can I arrange it to avoid distractions?	
When does my working time begin and end?	
When do I take breaks? How do I spend my breaks?	
What writing ritual do I use to start my working time?	
How do I end my working day?	
When and how do I set daily goals (or medium- and long-term goals)?	
When and how do I reflect on my working day?	
When and how do I monitor my progress and work processes in the long term?	

Setting Goals with the SMART Method

In order to organize your time efficiently, you first need to establish what you are hoping to achieve. For this step, it is crucial to determine clear and achievable goals. The SMART method can help you with that.

SMART is an acronym that stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ccepted, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-Bound. Every objective you formulate should include these five characteristics.

Table m: The SMART method with examples

	Meaning	Example
Specific	What exactly do I want to achieve? The objectives (and sub-objectives) should be formulated as clearly and precisely as possible.	I would like to write my thesis in the summer semester.
Measurable	How do I know that I have reached my goal? The goal should be measurable. There must be clear criteria that indicate whether the goal has been reached.	I have created a document that fulfills the requirements for a diploma thesis (cf. institute page).
Accepted	Why do I want to reach this goal? The goal should be formulated positively as well as in a challenging manner. It should be appropriately challenging and as motivating as possible (cf. Reichel p. 20).	I would like to start my career in autumn, by which time I will have completed my studies.
Realistic	Can you actually reach your goal (given the current circumstances)? The goal should be attainable considering the external circumstances and the given time frame. You should also take into consideration what kind of support you can use in order to reach your goal.	The time to complete the thesis is four months. It is currently the end of January and I have already received topic suggestions for my thesis. I should regularly confirm and then deliver my work results. On top of this, there is the SZD...
Time-Bound	By when would I like to have reached this goal? It is best to plan backwards, starting with the date of having reached your goal, in order to determine the latest possible starting time. But do not forget to include time buffers for unexpected difficulties and to set specific dates for sub-goals.	I expect to start writing in mid-April. This way, I still have one and a half months of buffer time at the end.

In addition to these five aspects, writing your goals down is a very important step in the process. Without making the goal official in writing, it usually has very little binding force. Take the time to consider your goals and tasks in peace, to formulate them and to write them down so that you can start the week, semester, or new year with a clear objective in mind.

Planning your Writing Time with the Tomato Technique

Working with the Tomato Technique, in which you alternate short, intense periods of work with small, regular breaks, helps to increase productivity. Both the effort to complete the work in the set time and the subsequent breaks are important for the successful implementation of the exercise.

When time is short, people often tend to skip breaks. However, this strategy often leads to taking breaks unconsciously, like wandering thoughts, looking out the window or checking emails again. To counteract this phenomenon, Francesco Cirillo developed the so-called "Pomodoro technique" in the 1980s. It got its name from Cirillo's egg timer in the shape of a tomato (cf. Cirillo 2020 2011).

Cirillo's idea was very simple: To objectively check his work performance and motivation, he set his egg timer for a short time interval. During this interval, he tried to work highly concentrated on one single work step and to block out any unwanted interruptions or other time wasters. To recover and to regenerate his concentration, he would take a short break after every work interval and a long break after four work intervals (cf. Cirillo 2006, p. V).

This method of time management is easily integrated into your work routine. It promotes focused working and helps structuring specific tasks.

Preparation

- Egg timer, smart phone
- Weekly plan, to-do-list or schedule (with tasks sorted by priority and the time needed for each task)
- Pen, paper, or document with a single task

Instruction

- Choose a task you would like to work on (and finish).
- Set your timer to 25 minutes.
- Work and focus on your chosen task (try not to be distracted by anything and quickly note down anything that bothers you you, switch off the phone / put it next door / mute it).
- When the time is up, mark your paper or document with an X to know where you can pick up with your work if needed.
- Take a break for 3 to 5 minutes: Relax or do some quick exercise.
- Repeat the tomato interval consisting of work unit and short break four times.
- After 4 tomato intervals (approx. 2 hours), take a long break of 15 to 30 minutes. All of your (work-unrelated) thoughts are allowed here. Leave your workspace.

(cf. Cirillo, 2020 2011)

Trying out the tomato technique yourself

Have a look at table n to get an impression on what working with the tomato technique can look like.

Table n: Example of four tomato intervals

Unit	Goal	Time
Unit 1	**Goal 1:** Write the introduction: topic and goal of paper	**(25 minutes)**
Break 1	*Get up and stretch*	(5 minutes)
Unit 2	**Goal 2:** Write the introduction: Methodology and approach	**(25 minutes)**
Break 2	*Have tea*	(5 minutes)
Unit 3	**Goal 3:** Continue reading literature for chapter two	**(25 minutes)**
Break 3	*Listen to a relaxing song*	(5 minutes)
Unit 4	**Goal 4:** Excerpt literature for chapter two	**(25 minutes)**
Long break	*Go for coffee with my colleague whom I've told "Four tomato intervals to go!" 120 minutes ago.*	**(30 minutes)**

Alternative

Use the table below as an example to try the technique yourself. You can work like this:

1. Think about how many tomato intervals you would like to do.
2. Think about a reward and write it down in the last table row.
3. Write down a goal for the next tomato interval.
4. Set your timer and work on your task.
5. Take a short break when the time goes off.
6. Continue from step 3 until you reached the desired amount of tomato intervals.
7. Relax and enjoy your reward!

Table o: My own four tomato intervals

Unit	Goal	Time
Unit 1	**Goal 1:**	**(25 minutes)**
Break 1		(5 minutes)
Unit 2	**Goal 2:**	**(25 minutes)**
Break 2		(5 minutes)
Unit 3	**Goal 3:**	**(25 minutes)**
Break 3		(5 minutes)
Unit 4	**Goal 4:**	**(25 minutes)**
Long break		**(30 minutes)**
Reward		

Bibliography

Bitchener, John. ***Writing an Applied Linguistics Thesis or Dissertation. A Guide to Presenting Empirical Research***. Palgrave, 2010.

Cirillo, Francesco. ***The Pomodoro® Technique | Cirillo Consulting GmbH***. 2011 2020, ***https://francescocirillo.com/products/the-pomodoro-technique.***

---. ***The Pomodoro Technique***. 2006.

Esselborn-Krumbiegel, Helga. ***Von der Idee zum Text. Eine Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Schreiben***. Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008.

Frank, Andrea et al. ***Schlüsselkompetenzen: Schreiben in Studium und Beruf***. 2nd edition, Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2013.

Fröhlich, Melanie et al. ***Zusammen schreibt man weniger allein – (Gruppen-)Schreibprojekte gemeinsam meistern***. Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2017.

Girgensohn, Katrin and Nadja Sennewald. ***Schreiben lehren, Schreiben lernen: eine Einführung***. WBG, 2012.

Grieshammer, Ella et al. ***Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium***. Schneider Verlag, 2016.

Hirsch-Weber, Andreas and Stefan Scherer. ***Wissenschaftliches Schreiben und Abschlussarbeit in Natur- und Ingenieurwissenschaften: Grundlagen - Praxisbeispiele - Übungen***. Verlag Eugen Ulmer, 2016.

Kruse, Otto. ***Lesen und Schreiben: der richtige Umgang mit Texten im Studium***. 2nd edition, UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2015.

Lange, Ulrike. ***Fachtexte lesen - verstehen - wiedergeben***. 2nd edition, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018.

Lange, Ulrike and Maike Wiethoff. "Systemische Schreibberatung." ***Schreiben. Grundlagentexte Zur Theorie, Didaktik Und Beratung***, edited by Stephanie Dreyfürst and Nadja Sennewald, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2014, pp. 283-299.

Leibniz Universität Hannover. Zentrale Einrichtung für Qualitätsentwicklung in Studium und Lehre (ZQS), editor. ***Starthilfe Schreiben. Tipps Zum Planen Und Verfassen Arbeiten Im Studium***. n.d. ***https://www.zqs.unihannover.de/fileadmin/zqs/PDF/Schluesselkompetenzen/Starthilfe_Schreiben.pdf***.

Lieberknecht, Agnes, and Yomb May. ***Wissenschaftlich formulieren: ein Arbeitsbuch: mit zahlreichen Übungen für Schreibkurse und Selbststudium***. utb, 2019.

Magilchrist, Felicitas. ***Academic Writing***. Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014.

Nöteberg, Staffan. ***Die Pomodoro-Technik in der Praxis: der einfache Weg, mehr in kürzerer Zeit zu erledigen***. 1st edition, dpunkt, 2011.

Obermaier, Michael. ***Arbeitstechniken Erziehungswissenschaft***. utb, 2017.

Reichel, Tim. ***Bachelor of time: Zeitmanagement im Studium***. Studienscheiss Verlag, 2016.

Bibliography

Scheuermann, Ulrike. ***Die Schreibfitness-Mappe: 60 Checklisten, Beispiele und Übungen für alle, die beruflich schreiben***. 1st edition, Linde international, 2011.

---. ***Schreibdenken: Schreiben als Denk- und Lernwerkzeug nutzen und vermitteln***. 3rd edition, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2016.

Wolfsberger, Judith. ***Frei geschrieben: Mut, Freiheit & Strategie für wissenschaftliche Abschlussarbeiten***. 4th edition, Böhlau, 2016.

Writing Center of Europa-Universität Viadrina. ***Checkliste für Absprachen mit Dozent*innen***. 2016.

---. ***Checkliste Strukturelle Überarbeitung einer wissenschaftlichen Arbeit.*** 2016.

---. ***Dreischritt***. 2016.

---. ***Formale Richtigkeit, Rechtschreibung, Grammatik***. 2016.

---. ***Leitfragen für konstruktives Feedback („Higher Order Concerns").*** 2016.

Writing Center of TU Darmstadt. ***Textlupe***. n.d.

Writing Center of Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. ***Argumentationsmuster***. n.d.

Wu, Jianguo. ***Improving the writing of research papers. IMRAD and beyond***. Landscape Ecology, 2011.

Wymann, Christian. ***Der Schreibzeitplan: Zeitmanagement für Schreibende***. Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2015.