



Common Thread

The "common thread" method will help you develop a coherent outline of your text and will make it easier for you to start writing a draft.

Once you have clearly defined your research question, you have collected material, delved into the topic, and developed a structure, it is often difficult to take the next steps: creating a well-designed outline and starting to write a draft, the so-called raw text. The technique "common thread" can help you to keep the argumentative structure of your text in mind and develop it while writing. Based on the question, the following structure can be deduced:

- 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?

Instructions

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 p. 96).
3. Now write about three sentences for each key point. 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 or make up theses. 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 “common thread” be used? Scheuermann mentions the following advantages:

- You gain an overview of your writing project early on – a more detailed overview than you would have with an outline.
- 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 satisfied because you "have" something to say/write about each key point.
- You can always consult the formulated thread to check whether you are getting off topic, if you are stuck, or to recall earlier arguments.

(cf. Scheuermann, p. 97)

Source: Scheuermann, Ulrike. *Die Schreibfitness-Mappe. 60 Checklisten, Beispiele und Übungen für alle, die beruflich schreiben.*

Linde International, 1st ed., Linde-Verl., 2011.

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