



## The Sticky Note Method to Plan your Writing Project

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 making a plan for your complex writing project by separating the whole process into smaller steps. This way, you will no longer face the huge mountain of work, but rather approach your project step-by-step.

The sticky note method allows you to collect your work steps in an uncomplicated way, and sort them in a flexible way. Try this method if you are a visual type and like to literally take things in your hands.

### Use the Sticky Note Method to Create Schedules

#### Step 1:

Write down on sticky notes all the steps or activities necessary for your writing project (cf. Fröhlich et al. p. 72). If necessary, also write down the steps/activities you have already completed. Alternatively, you can also use non-adhesive notes.

#### Step 2:

Place all steps and activities in a working order. Start with the end of the writing project, which is usually the deadline (cf. *ibid.*).

#### Step 3:

Add in your estimated time frame for each step or activity. Pay attention to the connections between the activities (i.e. no reading without literature research first). Also consider outside events or projects (vacations, exams...). Plan for at least 20% time buffer (cf. Fröhlich et al. p. 72, 74).

#### Step 4:

Set milestones that mark special points throughout the project (i.e. deadlines for single chapters, feedback...) (cf. Fröhlich et al. p. 72). Making your successes visible as well as celebrating them will help motivate you a lot!

### Step 5:

Now, create a project plan (in Excel with a Gantt diagram or on paper, for example as a big poster), using the sticky notes you wrote before (cf. Fröhlich et al. p. 73).

### Step 6:

Check in with your supervisor if your plan is realistic (cf. *ibid.*).

### Step 7:

Adapt your plan throughout your working process according to your needs. A schedule like this is supposed to help you as an orientation, not a strict structure, but it will help you to keep sight of your dates and goals. Generally, you should try to stick to the plan you made, but small changes are very normal and happen again and again. The more schedules you make for yourself, the easier it gets, as you learn more about your own working process and the time you need for certain steps. Time management is a skill that has to be learned and honed as well!

The sticky note method is not only suitable for creating a schedule. You can also use it to collect ideas or to work out the structure of your writing project or a single chapter. Here, too, it is easy to collect, add to and sort out ideas.

## Use the Sticky Note Method to Brainstorm or Develop an Outline

### 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 subject area 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 timeline or collection of ideas or outline in a visible place so that you can always see it.

As you can see, the sticky note method can be used for different planning processes. Can you think of other aspects of your working and writing process where using this method could be helpful?

Source: Fröhlich, Melanie, et al. *Zusammen Schreibt Man Weniger Allein – (Gruppen-)Schreibprojekte Gemeinsam Meistern. Schreiben Im Studium*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Vol. 3. Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2017.

Compilation: Writing Center of TU Dresden, 2020.

Revision: Sharon Király, typesetting, accessibility, and translation: Leonie Reuter, 2023.

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