Erasmus School of
History, Culture and
Communication

Writing Guide

Media, Communication and Culture

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Erasmus University Rotterdam
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Colophon

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Introduction

This handbook on academic writing is tailored to suit Bachelor students in Communication and Media (IBCoM) or Arts and Culture Studies (IBACS); Master and pre-Master students in the different Media Studies master programmes; Master and pre-Master students in the different Arts and Culture master programmes; and students enrolled in the Research Master in the Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts; degrees offered by the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication.

Reader Guidelines

Each year an updated copy of this guide is made available on the Media, Communication and Culture pages of ESHCC. Make sure you have easy access to it at all times; you are advised to either download and file a copy or print and bind a paper copy.

You repeatedly need to consult the different chapters of this book in order to profit maximally from its instructions and guidelines. You will find that your teachers, too, refer to these pages. Moreover, this guide is extensively used in the courses on Academic Writing and Academic Skills.

This handbook's first two chapters deal with fundamental aspects of good writing and offer detailed advice on organizing your writing, whether it is a book review, a report, a log, a research paper, or a Bachelor's or Master's thesis. What constitutes a good text? How to determine a topic for writing research papers? How to formulate a sound thesis question?

In the subsequent two chapters you then read about the preparatory work involved in writing a good paper or thesis. Chapter 3 is concerned with questions on theory and method; Chapter 4 discusses the search, study and "filing" of relevant information acquired from the internet, journal articles, and books.

Chapter 5 takes up a central position in this guide. You will frequently find yourself consulting it for the correct manner of inserting a reference in your text, quoting and paraphrasing, or the basics of compiling a reference list. In our school we adopt the APA style of referencing; the current Writing Guide adopts the seventh, i.e. the latest edition of their *Publication Manual* (2020).

Chapter 6 is a more in-depth version of Chapter 2 and deals specifically with the structure of a Bachelor's or Master's thesis, whereas Chapter 7 contains a thought-provoking treatise on reasoning and argumentative writing, a vital chapter if you are interested in doing solid academic work.

Chapter 8 is pragmatically concerned with good writing in English and offers some general advice on style in academic writing. Chapter 9, finally, deals with the requirements of layout and design we adhere to in Media, Communication and Culture. It contains a useful checklist you are advised to tick off before handing in your work. An Appendix lists the most common types of text outlines.

1 What Constitutes a Good Text?

This writing guide focuses specifically on texts you are required to write in the course of your studies and at the end of your degree. We could call them generically *academic texts* in order to distinguish them from say, journalism or commercial texts.

When asked to define the concept *text*, people usually say “a collection of sentences,” or “an introduction, body and conclusion,” or “something with information or a message of some kind.” Although all these definitions contain some element of truth, they do not really provide a good definition of what a *good* text is. So how does a good text come about? What are its features?

1.1 Features

First of all, in order for a text to tell us something, it must have one specific topic. In some cases this is already the point at which things go wrong. An academic article which fails to make its topic clear is wishy-washy and therefore cannot be considered a good text. So whether you are writing a summary or paper for one of your courses or a thesis to finish your degree, you must first of all have a clearly outlined topic.

A good text has one main topic.

Relating topic to thesis question

The topic will usually be cut-and-dried when doing an assignment for a course. If you are asked to choose your own topic, it is best to start by asking yourself *why* you are drawn to the topic. The topic must have aroused your curiosity for some reason or other; otherwise you would not have chosen it. In both cases, you must try and focus on what the main topic of your text will be. And in order to keep this topic well-defined and interesting, you must try to think about the informative answers your text is going to give. What question will it answer?

Think, for instance, of a short text with graphs that informs you about the weather. Basically, this weather forecast simply answers a question about the weather, whether it will rain or not, and so on. A given research article you are asked to summarise similarly answers a question (and usually some sub-questions too). In such cases the authors have formulated a *research question* or *thesis question*. The thesis question is the text’s central question, its rationale. Without such a thesis question and the answers (sometimes partially) found, there is no reason to write the text. Can you pinpoint it? Start from there when writing your summary.

Academic texts proceed from a clearly formulated thesis question.

Planning your writing

For all writing, planning is essential. Write an outline before you start. If you are asked to write a summary of a scientific article, think about what comes first. Do not necessarily follow the same steps of the article's line of reasoning. So, whatever you write, make a habit of drafting an outline before you start. This consists of a concise description of your topic, a provisional thesis question and a number of sub-questions (or even sub sub-questions) you want to answer in your text. The reason for granting this thesis question a mere *provisional* status is that it is usually only after the process of information retrieval (see Chapters 3 and 4) and writing and rewriting your outlines that a thesis question becomes more solid and defined.

Brainstorming

Your initial, provisional thesis question might well result from some proper brainstorming. Use any technique that works for you, but make sure you do not act as your own censor. In other words, don't hold back. Note down every question that arises in your mind while thinking about your topic; sifting is for a later stage. Questions often begin with: What…? Who…? Where…? When…? Why…? How…? Despite what…? Due to…? Organizing such questions into a mind map can be helpful. Once you feel you have really covered the ground with all sorts of question, you can begin with the process of narrowing down, selecting, and organizing certain questions. You can also see how certain questions are related to one another; and how a possible thesis question suggests a number of sub-questions to answer as well.

> Imagine you are writing on the topic of the International Film Festival in Rotterdam. You are not sure yet about the thesis question you will formulate. What perspective is interesting in describing this topic? Media coverage? Audience behaviour? Film industry? City marketing? Or are you rather interested in tracing the history of this event?
>
> These perspectives might lead to any the following questions. Some are broad, some more specific: What exactly is the International Film Festival Rotterdam? When and how did it start? Is it a subsidised event, and if so, what are the funding channels? Has it always been an annual event? What changes has it seen? How does it relate to general developments in media? How can social media be used to enhance the festival's import? How does it compare to similar film festivals in Europe? What kinds of audiences participate in the festival? What is the role and function of awards? What is the national stake in this international festival?

A proper outline comes about by spending a good deal of time thinking about the logical order of your questions and deciding on how they are related to one another. This will prevent you from jumping from one thing to the next, making giant leaps, becoming repetitive, or forgetting important matters once you start writing. In the process of writing your outline, you are left at last with a restricted number of questions which are each concerned with relevant aspects of the thesis question.

In conclusion we could say that constructing a text works as follows:

- thinking about the topic
- noting down a provisional thesis question
- formulating sub-questions about the topic (brainstorming)
- organizing these questions
- selecting the most important sub-questions
- formulating a definitive thesis question

You now have a topic, a thesis question and a list of specific questions arranged in logical order. Together they make up the outline and guarantee a good structuring of your text.

A good text has a logical structure.

The writing phase

After some reading and research, you should be able to answer most questions in your outline. Sometimes such a sub-question is dealt with in a single paragraph; but it might also take at least a separate section (consisting in turn of a number of paragraphs) or even a chapter to deal with that sub-question. This depends on the type of work you are writing and of course its length.

Paragraphs

Paragraphs hinge on a topic sentence (the sentence indicating what it is all about in this paragraph), either followed or preceded by a number of explanatory or argumentative sentences in support of it.

Indent the first line of every paragraph, so also of first paragraphs in a new chapter or section. This is according to APA norms for *manuscripts* (i.e.: texts that have not been published by an academic publisher) such as your paper or thesis. Use the tab key or the automatic paragraph-formatting function of your word-processing program to achieve the indentation (the default setting is likely already 5 spaces). Do not use the space bar to create indentation. This method provides a clear way of dividing paragraphs. In other words, dividing paragraphs by line spacing is *not* allowed and if your word-processing programme automatically adds a line space if you press *enter* this setting should be switched off.

By beginning a new paragraph at the right moment, the writer makes clear that he or she is about to embark on a new aspect in the general line of reasoning or will address a new sub-question. This makes reading a well-written text swift and easy. Just by reading the first and last sentences of each paragraph, the gist of the text becomes clear immediately.

On the next page you see two diagrams representing two basic paragraph forms, a pyramid and a triangle upside down. The concise topic sentence is always at the narrow end. The pyramid begins with the topic sentence. It is clear right away what the paragraph will deal with. Examples are not always required, so the paragraph’s structure can be more straightforward and clear, but also a little predictable. The second diagram, the triangle upside down, ends with the topic sentence, while it starts broadly with an example, an anecdote, or a generally observed phenomenon. This shape therefore always includes the three layers. It is a good idea to try and alternate the two different forms, as it makes a text more interesting to read. These are basic structures; in practise you will come across many variations.

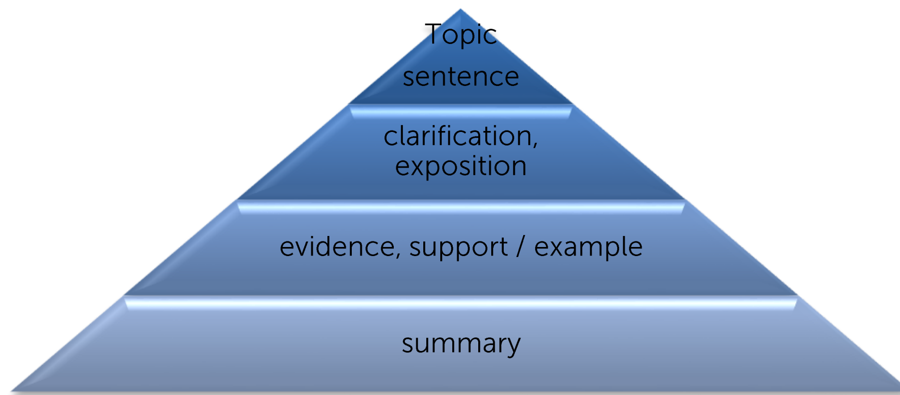


Figure 1. Topic sentence at beginning of paragraph.

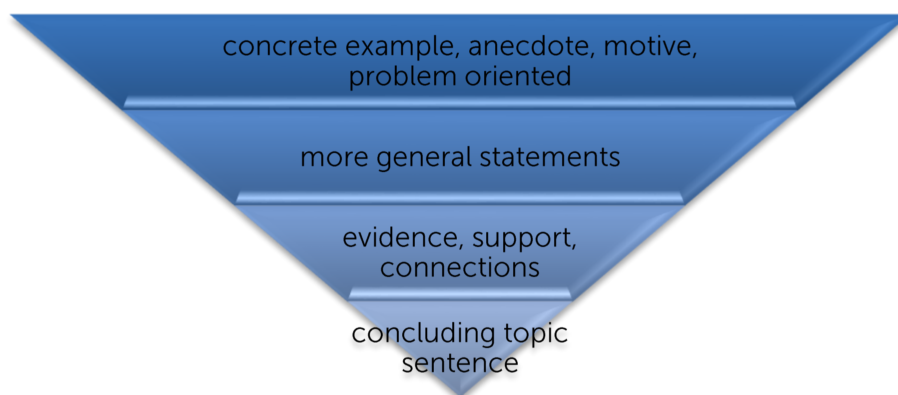


Figure 2. Paragraph culminating in a topic sentence

By way of illustration, once again, the IFFR. The complete paragraph containing the answer to the question of what the IFFR is might run as follows:

> The IFFR organizes all kinds of film-related activities to promote independent cinema and attract a large and diverse audience. Each year retrospectives are held on a specific director's work, with special exhibitions and public interviews. These directors and cinema artists are generally unknown to the public at large but have nevertheless a long standing. In 2013, prominent directors limelighted at the festival included, for example, the largely unknown Ukraine film director Kira Muratova and television and film maker Domik Graf from Germany. Thus the festival helps to broaden and solidify film knowledge.

This is an example of a paragraph beginning with the topic sentence. As the paragraph develops you see an example, which enlivens the information rendered and makes it more topical or relevant. In academic writing you will often decide to support what you're saying by paraphrasing discussions and findings of a scientific or scholarly source.

Another paragraph might address a question on Kira Muratova:

> My grandfather started to take me to the IFFR when I was still at secondary school and since then I have been hooked. The international orientation of the festival and the many unknown films I

could watch really put a spell on me. Each year, a number of directors were selected for a retrospective, and so it was possible to learn more about their work and appreciate it in a cultural and historical context. In 2013, the focus was, among others, on the controversial figure of the Ukraine film director Kira Muratova. Seeing the retrospective of her art work raised a number of interesting questions about the cultural dimensions of fame. My thesis is therefore concerned with the role of media in excluding this director from the cinematographic canon.

This paragraph closes with the topic sentence. This type is often more interesting to read and appears to be more expressive than the previous type, but it is also more difficult to write and not always applicable. Still, try and vary in type and length of your paragraphs, as it is a good idea to vary the menu every once in a while.

To sum up, a text consists of a number of paragraphs which, in turn, consist of topic sentences and clarifying statements in support of the topic sentence, sometimes enlivened with some sentences by way of illustration. The next section will spell out the specific requirements of academic texts.

1.2 Academic texts

What then is the difference between a straightforward informative text and a scholarly or scientific text? What characterises academic writing, in other words? The key answer here is accountability. In order to understand how this works for academic texts, you need to consider the kinds of sentences that are made in any given paragraph.

If we examine the smallest text unit, the paragraph, we can distinguish three things, namely: statements (claims), explanations or arguments, and examples. Statements or claims can be the paragraph's topic sentence: they offer answers to a question in your outline.

We can distinguish three kinds of statements:

1. *Factual* statements. These are, in principle, verifiable. Your reader must be able to decide whether your statement is true or not. For all statements beyond common knowledge, this means you provide documentation or a *source*. You must indicate to the reader exactly the source of this factual statement. An example of a factual statement is the following:

   Although many film festivals now take place in the United States, Europe is at the root of this particular phenomenon (De Valck, 2007, p. 14).

2. Statements that contain an *idea*, *hypothesis*, *opinion* or *conclusion*. These statements are not verifiable. Here the appropriate question for the reader is not "is this true?" but: "do I agree?" Such statements require arguments. Each time you claim something or come to a conclusion of some kind, you must also provide arguments. You must therefore base your claim on arguments; similarly, when you come to a conclusion, you must clarify how you came to that conclusion. An example of a statement in this category is:

   All in all, the International Film Festival Rotterdam is an exciting event.

3. *Other* statements, which are neither facts nor opinions. If you promise in your introduction to elaborate on something later on in your text, this statement can neither be called fact (it is not something you have already done, after all) nor opinion (you are not going to state what you feel

you *should* address something later on in the text). You could, however, ask yourself: is this particular statement, this sentence, relevant? An example of a statement in this category is:

The next chapter takes a closer look at the history of the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

The paragraphs in an academic text primarily contain topic sentences of the first and the second kind: factual statements and hypotheses. Because the content of your text must be verifiable – this is, after all, one of the requirements of scholarly research – you must specify the source(s) of your factual statements. All statements which fall under the second category – ideas, hypotheses, opinions, and conclusions – must be based on valid arguments. An academic text is therefore accountable at all levels.

An academic text is accountable at all levels.

Everything you derive from someone or somewhere else must be fully accounted for in scholarly terms. Chapter 5 deals with the rules you must follow when making a scholarly reference and putting together your reference list.

You will of course not derive all your claims from the work of others. You will also formulate your own opinions, assumptions, or conclusions. These will have to be justified with valid arguments in what we call an argumentation. In an argumentative piece of writing you can use different types or different ways of reasoning. These are dealt with in chapter 7.

Writing an academic text takes time. You should therefore make sure to start on time and plan ample time throughout. It is best to divide the process of writing into three phases:

1. planning
2. writing
3. rewriting or improving

A good writer – and that includes a beginning writer – will spend a lot of time on the planning phase: delving into the topic, thinking up a thesis question, and creating an outline. The time you invest here will repay itself in the long run; this will be particularly noticeable in the writing phase which then takes up less time and creates less frustration. The last phase – rewriting and editing – is also time consuming. It not only deals with the last small details, improvements and additions, but also ensures an attractive composition of your argument. Summing up:

An academic text

- has one main topic
- has a thesis question
- is well-structured in accordance with a previously designed outline
- provides answers to a number of sub-questions which in turn lead to answering the thesis question
- is accountable at all levels
- contains valid arguments
- is written in an appropriate style

The following chapter deals with appropriate outlines for various writing assignments, from those given to first year students to students embarking on their final paper or thesis.

2 Text Outlines

This chapter discusses text outlines and writing strategies for different types of assignments ranging from book review to final paper or thesis. As was made clear in Chapter 1, you should start all writing assignments by creating an outline, since this lays the foundation of your argument. You can derive the structure of your outline from a number of regular outlines for different types of assignments, as discussed below. A complete overview can be found in appendix A. Introduction, Conclusion, and List of References are the staple elements of any assignment and are not included in the outlines here.

2.1 Outlines for assignments with a defined topic

Critical summary
Especially with undergraduate courses, an assignment might be to critically review a book or a scientific article. The topic is clear, but you still need to convey it in your critical summary, together with the thesis question. You can expect to find them in the book's introduction or its first chapter; or in the article's introduction or abstract. The author comes to some kind of conclusion when answering the main thesis question, which should also be included in your text. Those are the basics, but what really matters is the road that leads to the author's conclusions. Were you able to follow the author's line of thought? Are his or her conclusions plausible? This is where you display your capacities for a critical summary.

An outline for a book review follows the text analysis format (2.3) and could look as follows:

1. What is the book's topic?
2. What questions does the author ask about the topic?
3. What is the structure of the book?
4. What theories and methods are used?
5. What conclusions does he or she come to?
6. Why are (or are not) these conclusions plausible?

Report
Studying Media, Communication & Culture often requires you to study specific websites, describe certain aspects of new media, visit a museum, attend a performance, or take a look in the newsroom of a radio or television programme or a magazine's editorial office. When writing up your report, make sure it does not become a mere summary of what you saw, did, and thought of it. Even before you venture out, before you actually start, you should at least have a temporary thesis question in mind. It is unlikely that you will approach your outing with a blank slate: you will undoubtedly have some expectations and perhaps also some ideas on the function of media, museums, the theatre, or newsrooms. Moreover, you will have consulted suitable sources – lecture material, articles and books – prior to your visit. This will enable you to focus on a number of specific issues.

The outline – list of questions – could look as follows:

Expectations

1. Why am I going to visit this particular museum / performance / editorial staff / website?
2. What are my expectations?
3. What is my main thesis question? What sub-questions are likely to arise?

Observations

4. What did I see or hear (observe)?
5. Can I now answer the questions I formulated?

Opinion

6. What is my opinion of what I saw?
7. What are my arguments in support of this opinion?

As you can see, the outline makes a distinction between recounting what you observe – factual information – and how you assess or value what you observe: that is, your personal opinion. You must describe the facts as meticulously and objectively as possible. Feel free to be subjective, however, when discussing your opinion. This subjectivity is not only evident through your use of phrases such as "I think" or "in my opinion;" your choice of words also determines whether you are describing a fact or colouring that fact with your own opinion. Still, you should not forget to base your opinions on solid arguments. The following passages illustrate both ways of describing your observations.

> *Observation*
>
> The objects are painted in bright colours: cobalt blue, bright yellow and fuchsia. The arms and legs of the human figures are very short and thin in relation to the torso and head. The limbs are not deformed, only created on a much smaller scale.
>
> *Opinion*
>
> Looking at this painting is an unpleasant experience since the loud colours hurt one's eyes. The figures are monstrous, arousing feelings of revulsion. The tiny, fragile legs seem almost unable to carry the weight of the torso, evoking a feeling of powerlessness.

Log

A log is any type of continuous reportage linking together a series of observation experiences. Usually, your lecturer requires you to differentiate between factual description and opinion. So the log outline resembles that of the report above. Observations – whatever you learned during (guest) lectures or observed during excursions or watching a film – are noted as objectively and analytically as possible. Your critical opinion can be conveyed in the closing paragraphs of each report or at the end of a cycle of observations – this depends on the type of assignment. Make sure to support your opinion with arguments and use the first person singular sparingly. A statement such as "Professor Tannen's lecture was most interesting" is unmistakably your opinion: you are, after all, the writer of the piece.

Case study

If you have been asked to describe a case study, you could adopt the problem analysis outline as illustrated in section 2.3. The questions you are required to answer are as follows:

1. What is the problem? (Or: what is going on?)
2. Why is this problem?
3. What has led to this situation? (What are the causes?)
4. What are possible solutions?

For this you need to gather, summarise, and analyse data yourself.

Internship report
Information concerning the particulars of the internship report can be found on the student pages of the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication website.

2.2 Choosing a topic and formulating a thesis question

Some course papers require you to choose a topic within a specified field. This can also occur in the case of writing your thesis. Choosing a topic is a tricky aspect. If you are required to choose your own topic, you must remember that it is something that will occupy your time for weeks or even months to come: therefore be sure to choose something that is of real interest to you. You must have the feeling that this topic is worth investigating.

Always choose a topic that is of real interest to you.

You all know about the pitfalls of choosing a topic that is too broad. How to avoid it? By making sure you already know quite some interesting data about your topic. Knowledge (acquired in the course of taking your degree) allows you to use the proper terminology and shows the pathways to new, interesting subject matters and thesis questions within the range of your topic. For example, someone new to the field might vaguely consider new media and society as a topic, whereas you have learned to differentiate specific subfields and might come up with the topic of the interaction of social media and censorship in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Knowledge allows you to limit the boundaries of your research topic.

You feel your knowledge is limited, but you still would like to explore a topic that is relatively new to you? Consult specific reference works related to your discipline, or the portal of your discipline at the EUR library site.

Thesis question
Now that you have chosen your topic comes the exciting bit. What is it that draws you to this topic? What thesis question is going to be the basis for your research? Even if a phenomenon has been researched many times before, you can still write a completely new thesis on it: it all depends on your thesis question. The thesis question determines the way in which you approach the phenomenon.

In the planning phase (see Chapter 1) it is essential that you organize the sub-questions in such a way as to create a logical, solid structure. When writing longer papers, such questions are provisional, they serve for the time being to structure the research for academic studies. When you have read important articles or book chapters on your topic, you can narrow down and specify your questions or even add new ones to your outline. Slowly but surely this procedure will lead to an outline containing a revised and exact thesis question and a number of sub-questions and even sub sub-questions.

Thesis question, problem statement, or hypothesis

Let us take a closer look at the term *thesis question*. Most writing manuals use this term or something like *problem statement* or *research question* to indicate what a student is going to research. You therefore either put forward a question you want to answer or state a problem you want to research. Alternatively, you could also hypothesise. In this writing guide you can interpret the term *thesis question* as the general term covering all these forms. It is also possible to attach a number of hypotheses to a thesis question or problem statement. This works as follows: based on the literature you have read, you make certain assumptions which you, at least temporarily, take to be true (also see 6.2). In your thesis you then set about proving the credibility of these assumptions or hypotheses. You may also come to the conclusion that one or more of your hypotheses needs to be adjusted.

Viability

In Research Methods courses you learn about asking the right type of thesis question (or research question). Let us briefly point out here a few major dos and don'ts: (1) avoid thesis questions that are too general or broad ("What are the global effects of internet failure?"); (2) avoid questions that take up a lot of time and expertise to research in depth ("What are the effects of urban migration on social media usage in Hong Kong, New Delhi, and Sao Paulo?"); and make sure you do not inadvertently phrase your question as a closed (yes/no) one ("Are audiences attending high culture theatre performances gradually growing older over the years?")

Text outline research paper or final paper

If you are required to do some minor research at the end of a course, you will be confronted with the need for a research outline. This is of course also true for research done for your final Bachelor's or Master's thesis. Your main argument is centred on answering these questions, based on the text outline for presenting research (2.3).

1. What phenomenon has been researched?
2. Why was this researched?
3. What theoretical approaches are used?
4. Which method has been chosen?
5. What is the expected outcome?
6. What is the actual outcome?
7. What conclusions can be drawn?

Especially lengthy papers (e.g. Bachelor's or Master's thesis) require some thought on organizing and filling out this outline; that is why an entire chapter – Chapter 6 – has been devoted to this topic.

2.3 Some standard outlines

Section 2.1 specified a number of text outlines. Here you will find an overview of the general text outlines that are most commonly used. Mind you, these outlines just provide guidelines and they can be shortened or lengthened as you please. Also, in practice you will find yourself combining a number of these outlines. For example, in presenting research you will use the matching text outline, but in place you will find the outlines for description or comparison useful too. And in writing a report you might base your work on evaluation, but also on description. When reviewing a scientific article, on the other hand, you might skip the question of audiences in the critical summary text outline, as this is implicitly clear anyway.

1. **Presenting research**
   What phenomenon has been researched?
   Why was this researched?

What theoretical approaches are used?
Which method has been chosen?
What is the expected outcome?
What is the actual outcome?
What conclusions can be drawn?

2. **Description**
   What is the phenomenon in question?
   Where (and/or since when) has it occurred?
   To what group or greater phenomena does it belong?
   What has been its development?

3. **Report**
   What is the reason for this report?
   What expectations do I have?
   What will be the leading questions?
   What are the observations?
   How can these observations be interpreted, and why?
   What are the answers to the leading questions?

4. **Comparing**
   What is being compared?
   Why is this comparison made?
   What are the similarities?
   What are the differences?
   What is the outcome for the comparison?

5. **Critical summary**
   What is the text's topic?
   What questions does the author ask about the topic?
   What audience is addressed?
   What is the structure of the text?
   What theories and methods are used?
   What conclusions are drawn?
   Why are (or are not) these conclusions plausible?

6. **Problem analysis**
   What is the problem exactly?
   Why is it a problem?
   What are the causes?
   What are possible solutions?

7. **Evaluation**
   What procedure was taken exactly?
   What criteria for assessment have been used?
   What positive effects can be observed?
   What negative effects can be observed?
   What is the overall evaluation?

3 Theory and Method

In this handbook the emphasis lies on academic writing. Theory and method are extensively studied and discussed during your courses. Still, selecting theories and opting for a method are a vital part of the planning phase of any piece of academic writing. This chapter therefore includes those aspects of theory and method which are of importance to the writing of papers and theses.

3.1 Theory

"Nothing is as practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, as cited in Oosterbaan, 2004, pp. 30-31). This quote from psychologist Kurt Lewin indicates that theory should serve practice – and that practice includes the writing of academic papers. Why write up a theoretical framework if it is not useful to your research? This would mean unintentionally writing two papers: a pointless and time consuming undertaking. What you need is a particular angle from which to view your topic. Viewing your topic from all angles would cause you to lose focus of your observations as well as your ability to describe and investigate what you see. A theory can offer one particular way of looking at a given topic, a focus point.

A theory focuses your perception.

Scholarly and scientific studies provide theories which explain the particular aspect of reality you want to research. A theory is always somewhat abstract and general; it speaks of *cultural participation* rather than *visiting museums*. The challenge at hand is to translate such a general, abstract theory to your concrete topic and thesis question. But before you are ready to do so, it is first essential to read the relevant literature in a precise and therefore useful way.

Reading literature involves asking questions. In this orientation phase, those questions should include the following:

- Which questions have already been posed on this topic? Start by reading the most recent publications on your topic.
- Which concepts do the authors link to the topic?
- Which authors are often alluded to? If you come across repeated references to an authoritative work, it is undoubtedly useful to read it.
- Which theories are suited to your thesis question?

Ultimately, you should select those theories which have the capacity to explain the phenomena you have chosen to research. Where, for example, journalists describe events which take place, scholars and scientists look for patterns, correlations, and natural laws. They design theories which explain phenomena. Examples concern the correlation between information and cultural participation, or the cultivation theory

in media: these theories help you to pinpoint, understand, and describe certain specific phenomena that you have observed,

A theory tells us something about the correlation between concepts.

The above-mentioned level of abstraction in theories comes forward in the repeated use of concepts that are often specifically designed to match a certain theory. Even though your research is a lot more specific and concrete than the theories you discuss, you must still incorporate the concepts in your writing. This enhances clarity and a proper academic style. Still, make sure that you state from what theory your concept is derived. All scholars describe the concepts they use meticulously. A dictionary definition is insufficient, because there are different perspectives on what these terms actually mean. You must resort to academic reference works specialised in your discipline. When translating the theory to your thesis question, you must therefore do so meticulously, avoiding a different interpretation of the theory at all costs.

Range of theories

A theoretical framework for a paper written in the Bachelor phase is limited; it can often be derived from the course syllabus. The Bachelor's thesis, however, requires a more elaborate theoretical framework. At the completion of your degree, you are expected to be familiar with the primary theories and views in your chosen field. In the Master thesis, therefore, the theoretical framework is the most elaborate. You are also expected to account for your choice of theory in scholarly terms.

If all goes well, your theoretical quest will lead you to the point at which you can formulate you definite thesis question. A thesis question is derived from the theory you have chosen to use. To put it simply: you are going to apply the theory to a concrete phenomenon. This means that your theoretical point of departure must be evident in your thesis question. Although you are still in the planning phase, you have gathered sufficient knowledge for posing a number of questions which you will answer in the course of your research. It usually works out as follows: in each chapter a major sub-question is answered, whilst the sub sub-questions are answered in the paragraphs of each chapter. Each answer will bring you one step further in your argument and thus one step further in justifying your final conclusion.

Theory
For the most part, people's cultural tastes are determined by their social background.

Hypothesis
The majority of people who regularly visit the Amsterdam concert hall come from a higher social background.

Theory
The press always adopt the form and colouring of the social and political structures within which they operate.

Thesis question
To what extent do social and political views of journalist and editors play a role in the selection of staff at *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* during the period January 2006 – December 2009?

Theory
The challenges in city branding are in committing stakeholders

Thesis question
Which groups can be identified as stakeholders in city branding industrial cities on the wane such as Detroit and Ferrol?

3.2 Method

You have determined your topic and you have formulated the thesis question. You have gathered data and information, and now know from which point of view (theory) you want to address the thesis questions and its sub-questions. During this process, you will also have decided on a suitable method for answering your thesis question. It is interesting to note the original Greek meaning of *method*, which is *route*; in other words, method connects your point of departure (the thesis question) with an outcome or destination. The method you will use is highly dependent on the phenomenon you wish to investigate, the theories you use, and therefore on the thesis question too.

The field of Media, Communication and Culture is broad and covers many areas, but still there are a number of things we can say about the nature of the themes you can investigate. It is possible, for instance, to focus on cultural or media *production*, the *products* this industry brings forth, or the *consumers* of these products. In the following overview you will see a number of examples of research types in these three fields:

1. **production processes (industry)**
    - analysis of (a part of) this industry; for example, the music or journal industry
    - analysis of government regulation; for example, subsidy policies for theatre companies
    - analysis of (aspects of) an organization or company; for example, mergers in the publishing industry

2. **cultural or media products**
    - content analysis of, for example, newspaper articles or television programmes

3. **reception**
    - research of consumer appreciation
    - research of coverage area

Once you have decided which of the three facets you want to focus your research on, you can begin to consult similar studies, in order to find examples of both theory and method. Perhaps such studies are not directly linked to your topic, but if you want to examine the popularity of a particular television programme or to what extent a particular journal is appreciated by its readers, it is obviously useful to look at other reception studies.

So, you should begin to determine which field your topic and research question belong to. What kinds of sources will you need? Media texts, policy documents, research reports, personal documents, (audio-visual) productions, or other material? What data do you need in order to answer your thesis question?

Examples illustrating the correlation between thesis question, theory, and method

1. This first example is of a Master's thesis dealing with the transfer of literary authors to other publishing houses. This topic belongs to the category of production processes or industry. According to media such as newspapers and opinion journals, commercialisation and expansion in the publishing world primarily account for transferring to another publisher. The hypothesis in this

thesis states that commercialisation only has an indirect influence on the transfer of authors to other publishing houses.

The student chose Bourdieu's field theory for her theoretical framework. This theory postulates that people who work in a particular branch (field) derive their power not only from financial capital but, in part, from cultural capital as well. The student researched the role of different parties within literary publishing houses. She interviewed publishers, editors, and authors who had switched to another publishing house; all representatives of financial and cultural capital.

2. Another research topic concerns the interest in and reports of foreign news in Dutch daily newspapers. In this case, foreign news can be regarded as a product. The thesis question is as follows: to what extent do three major daily newspapers derive their news items from either their own sources or from international press agencies, and what is the variation in this ratio?

   According to the agenda-setting theory, public opinion is influenced by the media's careful selection of news items. Newspapers which often rely on their own sources (using foreign correspondents) select different items from newspapers which solely rely on press agencies. In this case, a content analysis of daily newspapers would seem the best method to choose.

3. A student wants to examine the viewing habits of well-educated women. Because a theory concerning the viewing habits of young, well-educated women does not exist, this student has used general theories about viewing habits in the search for a suitable method. In this case, the method most used by researchers is that of a survey. The student therefore asked a group of well-educated women to fill in a questionnaire. In addition, respondents were also asked to keep a diary in which they reported their viewing habits.

Criteria for academic research

Whatever method of research you choose must adhere to certain criteria. The way in which you collect data, for example, must be systematic and verifiable. This means that you must write a meticulous account of all steps taken, so that other researchers can repeat the process. If asked, you must be able to produce the collected data (research material); although you are not meant to include all this material in the final version of your thesis.

Make sure to use a method that has been tried and tested − designing one's own method is more suited to the experienced scholar and there is no need to be original in this respect.

Collecting data

What you come to expect from your research is derived from scholarly and scientific literature, whether it be a theory or previously executed research. You have formulated your expectations in the thesis question. Collecting data that lead to your expected outcome is deceptively easy. Just imagine that you want to prove that young women today are less feminist than their mothers. You could interview the female students at your faculty. You could even ask them some leading questions, such as: do you feel a feminist journal still is necessary? The outcome of this 'survey' is highly likely to confirm your hypothesis, but it has little scholarly merit.

What is wrong, then, with this survey? In the first place, you had a thesis question with a more or less fixed outcome. In addition, results became even more predictable because you were in fact part of the survey group. Moreover, you probably influenced the results of the interviews since your own opinions were embedded in the questions.

Objectivity

Academic research should be as objective as can be. A common way to maximize objectivity is to be transparent in your research. This implies that all steps in the study must be explained in detail. It is

particularly important to select and use instruments (methods of research) common to your field. Transparency helps to make your research replicable: other researchers should be able to understand exactly how your study was run; they should be able to replicate what you did in order to find out whether they will arrive at the same results.

The research question you developed and the methods you choose determine the way in which you will collect data. This means, for example, that when conducting so-called “structured interviews” with people you must ask the same questions in the same order each time. Every method has its own rules. The various methods of research and their corresponding rules are dealt with at length in courses on methods and skills offered by our Faculty for Bachelor, pre-Master and Master students in Media, Communication & Culture.

Chapter 6, ‘Structuring your paper or thesis,’ takes a closer look at how to report the findings of your research. In the following chapter, however, we examine ways to find, file and use scholarly literature.

4 Searching, Finding, and Filing

When you know which theory (or theories) and method you want to use and you have formulated your central thesis question, you will know what information you need to obtain. How you go about this will determine your findings. Especially in the first phase of your research, it is important to know whether the texts you come across are reliable. For your research you are expected to rely only on academic books and journal articles, because they pinpoint relevant questions and offer verifiable, sourced information.

4.1 Finding what you seek

The danger of haphazardly searching everything that relates to your topic on the internet is that you end up with whatever turns up on top; you just acquire a pile of texts without knowing why these particular findings should be useful to your research. It is like buying everything you can lay your hands on in the supermarket, in order to make one tasty dish. Once you are actually preparing it, you realise you can throw out the major part of what you have bought and that you are missing a number of key ingredients to boot.

Quality of sources is more important than quantity.

Where to begin
You can start close to home, by examining in the first place the required works for relevant courses on your topic area. This is an obvious way to get started, because during your studies you will have become acquainted with authoritative scholars in your field. You will find references to other authors and the titles of their most important works in the bibliographies and footnotes of these required works. Select those that seem most relevant at first glance; that is to say, studies you feel will give you leads into your own research. Check for dates and availability; sometimes the authors have since then published a more recent and up-to-date work. If this does not provide you with sufficient material, you will continue your searches by consulting the library's search engine and databases. Before you start these searches, it is vital to determine your search strategy, such as explained in instruction videos at the University Library site and also in the Academic Skills course during your Bachelor's degree or pre-Master programme:

Determine a search strategy before you start your searching for sources.

If your search strategy is clear and you know more or less what you are looking for, without having a clear idea of where to look specifically, you could start your search with the Erasmus University Library's search engine. You access this page through MyEur. The search engine is largely self-explanatory and also has an 'advanced search' option. Press the information button to get a clear idea of its scope and limitations. The number of results or 'hits' can be pretty daunting and you will have to practise with narrowing down your searches and assessing the results.

The University Library's search engine is very useful for a quick orientation in the field. When focusing your research, however, it is necessary to also consult resources in the 'Guides by discipline' portals, yielding area-specific databases such as

- Communication Source
- Web of Science
- Scopus
- SpringerLink
- LexisNexis
- ABI/Inform Complete

Some research questions in our field are embedded in sociological or psychological research. In those cases also consult these Databases:

- Sociological Abstracts
- PsycINFO
- Business Source Premier

When browsing these portals, you may feel a little overwhelmed by the number of possibilities for effectively searching adequate information. Do not worry; your course instructor or (when relevant) supervisor will offer some specific signposts here.

Use the Library's search engine for orientation; use for specific searches the EURlib's 'resources by discipline' option

Your expedition should therefore start close to home, both virtually and geographically. Your first "stop" should of course be the Erasmus University Library. Try and be sensible in collecting your sources; read the abstract descriptions of the material first or browse content pages for books and section headings for articles. Then decide whether the approach in any way links up with your own thesis question. If you feel the study is irrelevant, don't waste time on it and move on to the next title. Make sure to work from MyEur if you are working from home, to avoid ending up paying for articles that belong to the licensed content of the EUR library and are freely available online for EUR students.

Scanning the results of your searches is at least as important as browsing through titles!

Author, title and a number of keywords

There are three types of search terms you can use to start a specific search in an (electronic) catalogue for articles and books: author, title, or keyword. If you decide to do an author search you should type the author's full name, so as to avoid being confronted with all possible hits for the same surname. It is also possible to do a title search, but remember that the same words reoccur in many different titles. Make it a habit to have full and correct titles at hand.

In the same way, when doing a keyword search, you need to be as specific as possible. Someone searching for articles on "television news for youngsters" will type in a string of words containing the terms television, news, and youngsters, but will also try different, alternative combinations or type in known programmes such as Children's BBC, Children's Newsround combined with terms such as study or research. Especially if you start by using an electronic catalogue, you will use combinations of keywords; you are, after all, trying to find out more about a possible connection between two different phenomena. By combining keywords, you may find publications which are concerned with this connection.

Tips:

- Type keywords and combinations in English and other relevant academic languages

- Think of variants and synonyms for keywords
- Try both a broad keyword search (journal → media) and a narrow one (media → journal)

4.2 Internet resources

Make it a habit to trust only articles published in scholarly and scientific journals; in other words, be cautious with just any paper posted on the internet. Use the EUR library or Google Scholar for good results and double-check even these. Should such a text yielded by a random search using a general search engine such as Google appear to be indispensable, then you should still check the following:

1. Who is responsible for the site? An individual, an institution? What kind of institution?
2. Who is the author of the article?
   If the author is unknown to you, do an author search to see what he or she has published, in what journals or with which publishing house.
3. Is the author a student or an experienced scholar?
4. Are there references to other publications in the text and if so, do they refer to reputable authors?
5. Is the text well-written?

When in doubt, discard the source or treat with extreme caution: probably the findings presented are not checked by any peer reviewing.

4.3 Filing

Finders are keepers. Everything you find should be filed in such a way that you can retrieve it when needed. Books eventually need to be returned to the library, but titles, keywords, quotations and / or summaries you can "keep."

Of course you can take all your notes in writing and neatly file them in folders or some other convenient filing system. Most students store their filings digitally. Make sure your entries are as complete as possible at this stage; it will save a lot of time when putting together your reference list. The following chapter deals with the requirements for referencing in the main text and for putting together your reference list.

RefWorks

The disadvantage of the storage method described above is that you repeatedly need to look up how a title description needs to appear in your text. After all, every source you use must appear in the reference list; and if you quote from it, you must do so according to specific rules. Therefore, it is wise to use an online reference manager via the Erasmus University library portal, called RefWorks. The EUR library also organizes workshops on this programme.

5 Quoting and Referencing

When should you disclose a source? Since this is sometimes difficult to determine, it is advisable to make noting down references a fixed habit. It is, after all, easy to delete superfluous references at a later stage, especially if you use Refworks or similar software; but tracking down where you read what at a later stage is difficult and time consuming.

5.1 Referencing: when and how?

Of course there are guidelines stipulating when it is necessary to make references or not. Something that is common knowledge, for example, does not need to be credited. It is, however, imperative that you reveal your source when deriving any particular insight or reasoning from articles or books you have consulted, even if you discuss a particular academic's view in a general sense only. So make sure to carefully note the publication details of sources you consult while researching your paper according to the formats spelled out below. If you decide to insert a quotation you should always also provide page numbers. There is no strict obligation to do so for paraphrases of a particular idea or findings but a reference to specific parts of the text are appreciated as helpful signposts if readers wish to look into this material.

Within Media, Communication and Culture we use the so-called APA style convention as the system for referencing. A new edition that is adapted to current practice appears about every 10 years and since the differences from one edition to the next are quite significant you should always adhere to the most recent edition. Currently, this is the seventh edition (American Psychological Association 2020). This is the most commonly used reference system within the Social Sciences. The main principle is that you use an 'Author-Date' system, indicating that references to sources are parenthesized in the text and not footnoted. If for whatever reason you want to deviate from this convention, you should arrange this with your supervisor. Whichever style you use, it is important that you are consistent. Do not forget to note down all relevant data of the sources you use, in order to have your references correct and complete. If you have chosen to work with Refworks, Mendeley, Zotero, or similar software, references within the text will almost always automatically take on the right form. Moreover, every title you refer to is automatically added to your reference list. Still, you should not completely rely on these tools and always carry out a manual check.

The EUR library and many journals also have a "cite as" option. In all cases, do not fully rely on these reference managers or citation options; see it rather as saving you the bother of typing it all up. Small mistakes are very common with these options, so make sure to check carefully.

Below, we will explain how to paraphrase or quote, or what to **wh**at a work that is cited in another source (5.2). **There is a section on in-text** citation first (5.3) and then three sections on the list of references (5.4-5.6). The chapter ends with some instructions on graphs, tables and footnotes (5.**7**) and a brief discussion on avoiding plagiarism (5.**8**).

5.2 Paraphrase and quotation

First, some general principles about quoting and paraphrasing. Examples follow below.

1. Try and quote as little as possible and opt for paraphrasing a line of thought if you want to refer to specific content. When paraphrasing a line of thought, you show you have fully understood it and are able to integrate it into your own line of thought. It involves more than just copying from the source text and changing a few words or the word order: Make a clear distinction between someone else's ideas and your own; you should indicate with a short sentence where your text continues with your own insights.

2. Quotes from texts or interviews do not go in italics, unless there are italics in the original texts or if you want to emphasise specific terms, in which case "[emphasis added]" needs to be included.

3. Use only double quotation marks when literally quoting a word or phrase, and also for introducing specific terms. If a word or phrase in your quote has quotation marks of its own, you should use single quotation marks for this "quote within a quote." Place the reference after the quote or at the end of your sentence, before the period. Make sure to add the page reference (Swindon, 2013, p. 471). For run-on quotations insert the page reference as follows: (Jones, 1996, pp. 96-97).

4. Accuracy: quotations should be accurate in all details, but they should also be brief. If you choose to leave out some words or a passage, you indicate this with 3 spaced points (4 at the end of sentence): this is called ellipsis.

5. If, by way of exception, you want to use a quote of more than 40 words, you should create a new block of text by starting the quote on a new line and indenting the entire quotation using a (Ctrl+) tab key. Use the same line spacing (1.5) as in your main text. Do not use quotation marks, unless the quotation incorporates another one. Either cite the source in parentheses after the quotation's final punctuation or cite the author and year in the narrative before the quotation and place only the page number in parentheses after the quotation's final punctuation.

6. When quoting from online sources without pagination, use the paragraph number for locating the source if the paragraphs are numbered. If they are not numbered, refer your readers to the specific heading of the document's section and do your own numbering of paragraphs. Sometimes, citing a specific part like a table or a video time stamp is more appropriate; for examples see the APA web page on citing a specific part of a source.

7. In principle, you must translate foreign quotations into English and include the original quotation in parentheses directly after the translation. Often, it is better and easier to resort to paraphrase, in which case it is advisable to add the page number.

8. Generally, ignore sources that you read about in an article or book but that you have not read yourself. In exceptional cases you may want to refer to such a source, perhaps because it is currently unavailable. See below for an example.

(1-5) Example of paraphrase versus quoting, block quotation, ellipsis, and plagiarism

Passage in the original text:
The peripheral corruption scenario is there for the people of the centre to draw on when they are pessimistic about their own role in improving the world, and doubtful and/or cynical about the periphery. It is deeply ethnocentric, in that it posits a very uneven distribution of virtue, and in that it denies the validity and worth of any transformations at the periphery of what was originally drawn from the centre. (Hannerz, 1997, p. 109)

Quotation:
Hannerz (1997) calls this scenario **“**deeply ethnocentric, in that it posits a very uneven distribution of virtue, and in that it denies the validity and worth of any transformations at the periphery of what was originally drawn from the centre**”** (p. 109).

Paraphrasing:
Hannerz (1997) criticizes this scenario for its ethnocentric premises and for its presentation of localized versions of Western products as intrinsically inferior.

Quotation with ellipsis:
Hannerz (1997) calls this scenario **“**deeply ethnocentric, in that it . . . denies the validity and worth of any transformations at the periphery of what was originally drawn from the centre**”** (p. 109).

Block quotation:
Starting points for addressing corruption in the debate on relief aid are not value free. Hannerz points out the following:

> The peripheral corruption scenario is there for the people of the centre to draw on when they are pessimistic about their own role in improving the world, and doubtful and/or cynical about the periphery. It is deeply ethnocentric, in that it posits a very uneven distribution of virtue, and in that it denies the validity and worth of any transformations at the periphery of what was originally drawn from the centre. (Hannerz, 1997, p. 109)

Plagiarism:
Hannerz (1997, p. 109) calls this scenario deeply ethnocentric, in that it posits a very uneven distribution of virtue, and in that it denies the validity and worth of any transformations at the periphery of what was originally drawn from the centre.

NOTE: this last example constitutes a form of plagiarism because it is a literal quote, while no quotation marks are used. The page reference does not change this verdict!

(6) Examples for quoting from online documents without page numbers

Online source, no page numbers, paragraphs are numbered:
- Gladwell departs from the notion that “people don’t rise from nothing” (2008, para. 5).

Online source, no page numbers, paragraphs are not numbered:

Refer to the heading of the section, if present. Capitalise the first word and all subsequent main words. Assign a number to the paragraph you are quoting from, where 1 counts as the section's first paragraph.

- Bradley and Richardson (2011) state that "workplace bullying is a process that does not occur in a vacuum" (section Theoretical Approaches to Bullying, para. 5).

If the heading of the section is long and unwieldy, you can shorten the title and enclose it in quotation mark, capitalising as above:

- The study showed that "children whose parents smoke are twice as likely to smoke as children of non-smokers" (Conron, Smith, & Janzen, 2007, "Childhood Smoking," para. 3).

The original section title was: "Childhood Smoking as an Independent Risk Factor for Addiction to Tobacco."

More examples: see the specific APA webpage.

(8) How to cite a source that you found in another source

There are good reasons to read all sources in the original. You should not simply copy source material from the source your read, it is not seen as good scientific practice. You can read more on this on the relevant pages of the APA website.

If you cannot read the original and you still want to use a useful and interesting quotation or source reference mentioned in the text you are reading, cite the source you are reading, and indicate that you read about the original source in the source you're reading now.

For example, in an article by Roland Robertson you read the following passage (2003, p. 70):

> Said (1986) was the first to draw attention to the fact that in the eyes of the West the doctrine is that all knowledge is based on Western foundations.

The first principle is: do not re-use the reference to Said and read the original book, you may learn a lot form it (and who knows, perhaps your secondary source misrepresents his ideas). If you still want to talk about Said, for example because of his role in the debate on orientalism, this is how you could do it:

- The alleged Western hegemony in developing scientific paradigms should be scrutinized (Said, 1986, as cited in Roberston, 2003).

In your reference list at the end of the paper/assignment, you mention Robertson (2003), the secondary source, but *not* Said.

5.3 In-text citations

In-text citations appear in parenthesis. Information must be as brief and clear as possible so as not to side-track the reader, merely referring to the alphabetised reference list at the end of your thesis where complete information on the source can be found. In the main text you therefore include no more than the author's name, the year of the text's publication, and page numbers if you are quoting a particular statement or passage.

Placement of citation in your text:

You have three options for placing citations in relation to your text. The first two are the ones most commonly used.

1. Parenthetical in-text citation: Place the author(s) and date(s) within parentheses at an appropriate place within or at the end of a sentence: With two authors; insert an *ampersand* (&) between authors' names. Add a page number for quotations, preceded by p. as in the example.

   Example:

   > Researchers have studied how children represent mathematical problems (Alibali & Fischer, 2009).
   >
   > Seeing corruption everywhere but in the centre reveals an ethnocentric bias based on a "very uneven distribution of virtue" (Hannerz, 1997, p.109)

2. Place only the date within parentheses and use *and* instead of *&* in the case of two authors. The APA Style manual calls this a "narrative citation".

   Example:

   > Alibali and Fischer (2009) discuss whether science students actually adopt the taught strategies.

3. Much less common: integrate both the author and date into your sentence:

   Example:

   > In 2009 Alibali and Fischer reported that third- and fourth-grade students improved their problem representation when they were taught the equalize strategy but did not improve their problem representation when they were taught the add-subtract strategy.

If you are referring to the same source in a long continuous paraphrase, cite the work being paraphrased on first mention. Once the work has been cited, it is not necessary to repeat the citation, as long as the context of the writing makes it clear that the same work continues to be paraphrased. If the paraphrase continues into a new paragraph, reintroduce the citation. If in your writing you switch between sources or have a passage with your own observations, always repeat the citation whenever you go back to the source again, so that it is clear who writes what.

What to do with one author, 2 authors, and three or more authors

1 or 2 authors: cite name(s) in first and all subsequent citations.

- (Lyon, 2007).
- Carter and Dunbar-Odom (2009) argue that …

3 authors or more: cite only the first author's name, followed by "et al." in every citation, even the first, unless doing so would create ambiguity between different sources.

- (Brookes et al., 2004)
- Brookes et al. (1993) suggest that …..

Two or more sources within the same parentheses

Arrange by order of the reference list (i.e. alphabetically); use a semicolon between works.

- (Alibali & Fischer, 2009; Siegler & Smith, 1976).

Two or more works by the same author(s) within parentheses

Do not repeat their name(s). The earliest year comes first; separate the dates by a comma.

- (Lyon, 1994, 2018)

Two or more works by the same author(s) and with the same date

Add a letter (a, b) as a suffix to the date and do the same in the in the reference list. In assigning a, b, etc., follow the alphabetical order of the article´s or chapter´s title.

- (Trottier, 2017a, 2017b)

Complications: websites, reports by institutions, sources without author or date

Websites:
General mentions of whole websites, whole periodicals, and common software and apps in the text do not require in-text citations or reference list entries because the use is broad and the source is familiar.

- The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Writing Center website is an excellent source of information on writing.

When referring to any specific online file or a document on a particular website (i.e., not an academic journal article but, for example, a particular report), use the author-date principle and consult the *APA Style Manual, Seventh Edition* or the most frequent cases for data sets, reports, or online media mentioned on their website.

Some types of documents appear to have no specific author at all. For instance:

The text is authored by a group, organization, institution, ngo, government body, taskforce, association, etc.:
If no specific author can be identified, the text is considered to have been written by the group or organization. Sometimes it is desirable to abbreviate this organization, do so in parenthesis when first mentioning the full name on the first citation.

- The National Institute of Mental Health concluded in their report on social media addiction (NIMH, 2009)…..

No identifiable author, *Publication date unknown, missing title, etc.*
Especially with non-academic sources you may find that elements such as author, date, or title are missing—sometimes even all three of them. Consult for each specific case the "missing reference information" section on the APA website.

Lectures; email from relevant professional

Unrecorded lectures, information retrieved from a conversation, an interview, or an email with a relevant professional (e.g. an academic, a politician, a government employee): you may want to cite these sources, but use such materials sparingly. They count as nonrecoverable data and are referred to as "personal communication." Use as little as possible and cite within your paper as illustrated, but do not include in your reference list.

- (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, September 21, 2009)

NB: This does not apply to (transcripts of) interviews, focus group conversations, etc. that are discussed in the results chapter of a BA or MA/MSc thesis. See Ch. 6.4.

Recorded lectures or ppt slides in a Learning Environment such as Canvas: these are recoverable for the students and lecturers within that specific, secured, online environment. Refer to the author of the lecture just like any in-text citation and see below for how to create the reference for the reference list.

5.4 List of References: General Remarks

Online sources

Study the APA Style website for accurate, detailed information on referring to a wide range of online sources from peer reviewed journal articles to Facebook discussions. The general principle in APA style is to include the information you need for identifying and retrieving a source.

Most academic journals and many electronically published scientific books now make use of so-called digital object identifiers, often referred to as a DOI. A DOI is a permanent link. The way of referring to such a DOI has changed over time. The current convention is as follows:

- http://dx.doi.org/xxxx

You are supposed to adapt older DOI references to this current form (see below for some examples).

Use a DOI and do not cite academic databases such as EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, or JSTOR. If there is no DOI, then the article is probably hosted by a site of original, proprietory content and you must try and figure this out. For examples, see here.

If the source has no DOI or any other type of permalink: refer the reader to a working URL.

Only mention a *date of retrieval* if the content is unstable or likely to change, such as with wiki references. Note however that with such references you can often cite a permalink by accessing the viewing history of the page.

Sources in another language

If you read the source in the original, cite this original version. Give the original title followed by, in square brackets, the English translation. Sources in languages using a non-roman alphabet script should be transcribed to the Roman alphabet.

Titles: italics or not? Capitals or not?

Take a good look at the examples below to determine what elements in a reference should be italicized. The general rule is that stand-alone sources (book, films, reports, journal titles for example) and any longish source receive italics, while individual parts of a whole are not italicised.

- Titles of journal articles: no italics
- Titles of journals, magazines, and newspapers: italics, and in addition, all main words capitalised.
- Titles of books, theses and dissertations: italics

- Titles of motion pictures and TV series: italics
- Titles of a single TV episode: no italics.
- Titles of a music CD: italics
- Titles of a single track: no italics.

5.5 Sample references by type

In your paper, the list of references should be in alphabetical order according to the first author's last name. Here, to make it easier for you to find particular examples, the items are arranged by type of reference. See section 5.6 for creating the list of references.

Periodicals (journal articles)

Please note: Below we explain the general principles. We supply a few examples, but we strongly recommend you visit the APA Style website for a wider range of examples.

General form:

Author, A.A., Author B.B., & Author C.C. (xxxx). Title of article: If applicable a subtitle. *Title of Journal, xx*(x), xx-xx. http://dx.doi.org/xxxx

- First you name the author, surname first, a comma, and then the initials (no given names, no titles).
- With two to twenty authors: a comma between authors, also the one but last, and before the last author an ampersand (&). Close with a period.
- With 21 or more authors, include the first 19 authors' names, insert an ellipsis (but no ampersand), and then add the final author's name:

  Author, A. A., Author, B. B., Author, C. C., Author, D. D., Author, E. E., Author, F. F., Author, G. G., Author, H. H., Author, I. I., Author, J. J., Author, K. K., Author, L. L., Author, M. M., Author, N. N., Author, O. O., Author, P. P., Author, Q. Q., Author, R. R., Author, S. S., . . . Author, Z. Z.
- Then, between brackets, the year of publication. Close with a period.
- Then the complete title of the article. Main title and subtitle are separated by a colon. No capitalisation, except for the first letter of the first word after the semicolon; just use uppercase and lowercase as if in a sentence. Close with a period.
- Then, in italics, the title of the journal. Here all main words begin with a capital. Place a comma.
- After the comma the volume number, also in italics (but don't add Vol. or the like).
- Then, immediately after the volume number and without spacing, enter the issue number between brackets in roman (not in italics), followed by a comma. If there is no issue number, you just cite the volume number.
- Then, after the comma, indicate the page range of the full article. Just the numbers, so do not use p. of pp.
- For journal articles with no page range, indicate the article number (see below for examples)
- Close with a period, then add the DOI or if there is none, the URL. Do not add a period after the DOI or URL as this might compromise the link. You can choose to retain the active links or just use a text reference.

Often you will find a so-called citation suggestion. They rarely take the form of a correct APA reference. So they save you some typing and help you to identify the elements of the reference such as author or title, but a publisher might use Vol. 32 for a journal reference, whereas you just want to cite *32*.

1. Most common format:

Brookes, R., Lewis, J., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2004). The media representation of public opinion: British television news coverage of the 2001 general election. *Media, Culture & Society, 26*(1), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443704039493

2. No page numbers or page range: cite the article number:

Jerrentrup, A., Mueller, T., Glowalla, U., Herder, M., Henrichs, N., Neubauer, A., & Schaefer, J. R. (2018). Teaching medicine with the help of "Dr. House." *PLoS ONE, 13*(3), Article e0193972. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193972

3. Article in a foreign language, no DOI:

Between square brackets you supply a translation of the title.

Garbin, E. M. (2003). Cultur@ s juvenis, identid@ des e Internet: Questões atuais [Youth cultures; identities and internet: contemporary questions]. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, *23*(1), 119-135. https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1413-24782003000200009&script=sci_arttext

Note that if the foreign language has a non-roman writing system, you customarily transliterate (romanise) the title before giving its translation.

For more types of references on journal articles, consult the APA website with sample references or search their blog.

Magazines and newspapers

In general: as with journal articles, but:

- Add month (for magazines) or specific date (for newspapers and weeklies).
- The page range may be just a single page, that's okay!
- If there is no volume, issue, or page numbers, just omit these elements.
- If there is no DOI, cite the magazine's URL if there is one. Do not cite an academic database such as JSTOR.

  Schulman, M. (2019, September 9). Superfans: A love story. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/16/superfans-a-love-story

For some more examples, consult the APA sample references.

Books by authors and books compiled by editors

General principle:

Provide the author, year of publication, title, and publisher of the book. Include any edition information in parentheses after the title, without italics. Include the DOI (if there is one) after the publisher name.

If the book does not have a DOI and is a print edition, end the book reference after the publisher name. If the book is an ebook from an academic research database, do not include such database information in the reference. Please realise that print books scanned in Google Books are incomplete and that it testifies to good scientific practice to go and look for the real thing.

Author, A. A. (xxxx). *Title of the book*. Publisher.
Editor, A. A., & Editor, B.B. (Eds). (xxxx). *Title of the book*. Publisher.

With a single editor the notation between parentheses becomes singular was well : “(Ed.)”

1. Single author, no DOI:

Nash, C. (2016). *What is journalism? The art and politics of a rupture.* Springer.

2. Numbered edition, 2 authors, no DOI:

Hyde, J. S., & Delamater, J. (2008). *Human sexuality (*10th edition). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

3. Compiled by editors, with DOI

Fornter, R.S., & Fackler, P.M. (Eds.). (2014). *The handbook of media and mass communication theory.* Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591178

A single chapter in a book

With books written entirely by an author (or two authors; it is rarely more than that), you always refer to the entire book and not to the chapter or chapters you studied specifically. This is different when the book is a collection of chapters or articles. In that case, you do give a specific reference to the chapter, while also crediting the editor(s) of the book. Contrary to journal articles, you insert pp. before the page numbers.

Lum, C.M.K. (2014). Media ecology. In R.S. Fortner & P.M. Fackler (Eds.), *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory* (pp. 137-153). Wiley and Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591178.ch8

Dissertations and Master’s thesis

If you want to cite a Dissertation or thesis you probably found it in a specific online thesis repository or archive. Depending on the type of repository, the way to format your reference changes. If there is no such database or online archive, you treat the thesis like an ‘unpublished dissertation’ See the APA website for examples of these different types (scroll down to “Dissertations and Theses”).

Reports, policy papers

Consult the section called ′reports and gray literature’ on the APA website for lots of examples. Usually you add specific document information between brackets. If the document does not name any authors, treat it as a publication by an organisation.

Recorded lectures or powerpoint slides

Only suitable for including in the reference list in the case of course participants and lecturers who can access the protected online learning environment. Provide the general login page rather than the direct URL. More information here.

Fokkema, A.G. (2019). *Performance monitoring* [recorded lecture]. Canvas.eur.nl

Audiovisual media, data sets, and online media

There are many other types of sources you may want to include, such as conference proceedings, a reference to a film or an artwork, to datasets, or to webpages and online media like a TED talk or a twitter post. The basic principle of referencing four elements (author, date, title, and source) remains the same throughout, but application of these principles changes per type of source. Please consult the APA website with reference examples carefully to find what you are looking for.

5.6 Creating the list of references

Begin the reference list on a new page, and title that page "References" in bold (do not use the quotation marks). List only those sources you have cited and do not list websites and personal communication (see 5.3). As in the other sections of your paper or thesis, use 1.5 line spacing.

In general, order the reference list alphabetically by authors' surnames (or whatever substitutes the author's name). Most references take up 2 lines or more; in that case, you indent all lines except the first; this is called a hanging indent. Do not line-space between references. Do not use bullet points or numbers.

Follow these guidelines for special cases:

1. Same author(s), different years: order by year of publication, earliest to latest.
   Lyon, D. (1994). *The electronic eye: The rise of surveillance society*. University of Minnesota Press.
   Lyon, D. (2018). *The culture of surveillance: Watching as a way of life*. Polity Press.

2. Same author(s), same year: order alphabetically by first word of the title (excluding a, an, or the), and add a lowercase a, b, etc., to the year.
   Trottier, D. (2017a). 'Fear of contact': Police surveillance through social networks. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, 4*(4), 457–477. https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/23254823.2017.1333442
   Trottier, D. (2017b). Digital vigilantism as weaponisation of visibility. *Philosophy & Technology, 30*(1), 55–72. https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4

3. Same initial name(s) in multiple-author entries: alphabetize according to the first surname that differs.

   Harper, G. F., Mallette, B., Maheady, L., Bentley, A., & Moore, J. (1995). . . .
   Harper, G. F., Mallette, B., Maheady, L., Parkes, V., & Moore, J. (1993). . . .

4. Authors'' names with fixed prefixes such as M', Mc' and Mac are alphabetized literally: MacArthur precedes McAllister, MacNeil precedes M'Carthy.

5. Author's names with detached prefixes (such as van, de, van de(r), von) are alphabetized for the first prefix. Retain the author's preferred capitilisation.

   van Dijk, T. A. (2011). *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction (2nd ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Sample reference list with 1.5. line spacing

References

Brookes, R., Lewis, J., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2004). The media representation of public opinion: British television news coverage of the 2001 general election. *Media, Culture & Society, 26*(1), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443704039493

Lum, C.M.K. (2014). Media ecology. In R.S. Fortner & P.M. Fackler (Eds.), *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory* (pp. 137-153). Wiley and Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591178.ch8

Schulman, M. (2019, September 9). Superfans: A love story. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/16/superfans-a-love-story

Trottier, D. (2017a). 'Fear of contact': Police surveillance through social networks. European *Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 4(4), 457–477. https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/23254823.2017.1333442

Trottier, D. (2017b). Digital vigilantism as weaponisation of visibility. *Philosophy & Technology, 30*(1), 55–72. https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4

van Dijk, T. A. (2011). *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

5.7 Tables, figures, and footnotes

Tables, figures, and illustrations

For using tables and figures of your own device it is best to consult the lecture material of Research Methods courses. Do not copy tables, figures or illustrations from consulted literature. They are mostly strongly protected by copyright. In a few sentences, describe what the table or illustration shows and refer to the source. Photos and drawings must not be copied; copyright on visual material is much stricter than on textual material. Do not assume that your work will only be read by your tutors; it could also be placed on the faculty website. If you wish to use illustrations, use those that are available free of charge. There are many websites offering this service.

In short: everything you derive from someone else's work must be accounted for by stating who the author is and where you found your information. If you fail to do so, you are not borrowing ideas or information, but stealing them. Prevent being accused of plagiarism at all cost!

Explanatory footnotes

Sometimes you will feel the need to elaborate on something without interrupting the main text. In that case you can use footnotes, which you can create using the footnote function in Word. You must however be sure that the information in the footnote is not essential to your main argument. Everything that is essential to understanding your line of thought belongs in the main text.

1.

5.8 Plagiarism and copyright

What is paraphrasing and what is plagiarism? This is a tricky question, since you derive much of your information from the work of others. The dictionary definition of plagiarism is "to take (the work or idea of someone else) and pass it off as one's own." The crux is in the latter, passing "it" off as one's own (plagiarism, nod). There is nothing against using knowledge and results from others as long as you indicate that you are doing so – that what you are arguing or supporting comes forth from previous scholarship. It is therefore essential that you know exactly how and when to refer to sources you have used, and to never pretend someone else's idea is your own.

The only way to avoid plagiarism is to refer to sources correctly!

It should be clear that you are never to use texts or parts of texts without referring to the source, but what about thoughts and reasoning derived from others? Of vital importance here is the concept of ‘original’. All notions and ideas originate from someone’s mind. Therefore, if you wish to elaborate on someone else’s idea, you must correctly attribute it to this author. This also counts for arguments, conclusions and research results you come across. Always try to track down the original author of an idea or concept; this way you will avoid citing someone who has committed plagiarism.

Pitfalls

1. Imagine coming across that perfect article, paper, book or thesis: are you permitted to use the same structure or method of research? Certainly, as long as you explicitly refer to the author who provided you with that wonderful structure or method.
2. When you have followed the rules and listed all your sources only to discover that you have cited others so often that the end result can hardly be called your own, something is wrong. Someone else’s concepts or discoveries should *support* your argument, not provide the body for it.
3. Never hand in the same paper or parts of your paper twice – even if it is for another module or another tutor. Doing so constitutes fraud.
4. It is possible that you wish to write your final thesis on the same topic as a paper you wrote earlier on in your studies. This is allowed, although you are not permitted to use the integral text. Be sure to discuss this thoroughly with your supervisor.

How can plagiarism be avoided?

Abiding by the following rules should become second nature:

1. When using or describing an idea that originates from someone else, immediately name your source. Failing to do so means you are giving the impression that the idea is yours.
2. Even if you paraphrase someone else’s text, the body of thought is not yours. Therefore, when paraphrasing you must also clearly indicate the original source.
3. Should you use a text from the internet, make sure you place it in a separate document – not in your main text. Note the exact site, author and date – preferably in Refworks – so as not to run the risk of later unwittingly mistaking the text as your own.
4. You are only allowed to describe tables, illustrations, photos and other visual material; you are not to copy them. You must refer to them in the same way as you would to written texts. Hence, name your sources fully and completely!
5. You are also plagiarising if you present the work of a befriended student as if it were your own. If the befriended student in question has given permission, you are both breaking the law.

Copyright and penalties

Although plagiarism and copyright are closely linked, you will not find the term ‘plagiarism’ in the Copyright Law. Despite this, you are still breaking the law by committing plagiarism. Though this offence has no legal consequences if your work remains unpublished, it will do irreparable damage to the remainder of your studies and academic career! Depending on the severity of the fraud, plagiarising means you are at risk of punishment ranging from a mild penalty to an official reprimand or even – in the most severe case – suspension. Bear in mind though, that the most important reason for meticulously revealing your sources should not be fear of punishment, but the desire to produce a text which can genuinely be called your own, one which can endure academic criticism.

Publishing

Some students or graduates are invited to publish their work in a more or less reputable journal. Needless to say, this is highly flattering. Though justifiably so, you should tread with caution and discuss the possibility

of publishing with someone who is experienced. Your supervisor is one such person. Perhaps it is advisable to revise your text or elaborate on your topic first before publishing. Once your work has been published, that is it: it cannot be published again in another journal. To avoid regret, educate yourself on copyright laws before you hand over your work.

This chapter contains a lot of dos and don’ts. Keep them in mind, even when working on the argumentation of your text. But what are arguments exactly, and how do you structure them effectively? The following chapter is aimed at answering these questions.

6 Structuring a Research Paper or Thesis

This chapter introduces you to some general points concerning writing a research paper, a Bachelor's thesis, or a Master's thesis. Often much more detailed guidelines are supplied for relevant aspects of the specific paper or thesis you are writing. For your Master thesis Media Studies, for example, the *Methodological Guidelines for Thesis Research* is leading.

All texts written throughout your studies contain arguments of some kind. Every text should answer one or more questions and each answer or conclusion should be supported by logical reasoning. Discursive writing in theses and papers is complex, since you need to work your way towards answering the main thesis question and you must do so step by step. This chapter therefore deals with structuring your arguments. The content aspect of a solid argument is dealt with in Chapter 7, which deals specifically with argumentation.

As you were told in Chapter 1 of this guide, a good writer starts off with a plan – that is, an outline which forms the structural basis of the text. The contents page can function as the master plan or the skeleton of your paper. In the early stages, the contents page should only contain chapter headings, since a new outline must be written for each new (sub) section.

Research outlines

Chapter 2 of this handbook provided a number of examples of outlines and illustrates how to work with them. The most common standard outlines are listed there and should be seen as a help to get started. In essence, a thesis or paper is a research report and for every research report you write, you will need a research outline. A research outline is structured by the following questions:

1. What phenomenon has been researched?
2. What are the theoretical points of departure?
3. What method has been chosen?
4. What are the results?
5. What conclusions can be drawn?

These questions provide a framework for your writing, a rough draft of what is to come. The final form of chapters and sections will be developed within this framework. In the last chapter of this writing guide you will find an example of how to distinguish between chapters, sections and sub sections in the layout of your paper.

With a bit of imagination, it is now possible to discern a contents page.

Contents page
- Introduction
- Theoretical framework
- Method
- Results
- Conclusion

The introduction or introductory chapter answers the first question (see the questions above); the theoretical framework answers question two; the chapter on method answers question three and so on. This general format is further elucidated below.

A Bachelor's thesis consists of about thirty pages. According to the outline above, you need about five chapters; possibly four if you choose to combine theory and method, or method and results. A Master's thesis is longer, usually about fifty-five to sixty-five pages, for which you will also need five chapters.

6.1 The introduction

What kind of questions is answered in an introduction? Readers want to know, at any rate, which topic will be discussed and why it is worth reading about.

Ask yourself which questions you have about your topic. Do you wish to describe your topic exhaustively, investigate its development, or compare it to another phenomenon? A lot of the preparatory work has been done in the planning phase (see Chapters 1 - 4); hence you are now capable of formulating a clear thesis question. Also try to comment on the relevance of your research. Perhaps it elaborates upon prior research; it may be that you narrowed down your research question; or you are about to apply a method of research to a topic for which no theory is as yet available. The reader also wants some guidelines as to what is to be expected from the rest of the text.

Introduction outline
1. What is the motive for your choice of topic?
2. What is the central thesis question?
3. What is the relevance of your investigation?
4. What is the objective of your paper/report/thesis?
5. What can the reader expect?

6.2 Theoretical framework

In the planning phase you will also have made your choice of theory (see Chapter 3). Hence, material to base your theoretical framework on is available. Several theories should be discussed, in order to weigh their relevance for your topic or thesis question. You provide arguments for your choice of theory or theories. At the end of your chapter on the theoretical framework, you restate your thesis question and introduce a number of theory-based hypotheses or sub questions (the latter can also be done at the beginning of your Methods chapter – this depends on the method of research).

As the theoretical framework describes and compares a number of relevant theories and evaluates which theory is most appropriate for your investigation, you will be using the outlines for describing, comparing, and evaluating (see 2.3) in succession. Begin by defining the theory. For example, for describing phenomenon X, theory Y is relevant. Take the outline for describing a phenomenon as a starting point:

1. What is Y's position on X?

2. What has Y investigated with regards to X and what are Y's findings or theories?
3. To what discussions have Y's findings led?

From outline to text: an example

How do you move from an outline to the actual text? The outline above indicates that you will need at least three paragraphs, since the task at hand is to answer three questions, that is to say, investigate three sub topics. Firstly, you will set out to describe what you have discovered about this particular scholar, hence answering the first question. The first paragraph should therefore answer the question: what is Y's position on X? In the example below, the question is: what is Bourdieu's (Y's) position on social inequality (X)?

> According to Bourdieu, social injustice is a result of the inevitable battle for power within a field, be it politics, science or the arts. In order to gain power in a particular field, people need economic, cultural and social capital. Although there is always some degree of social inequality within a certain field, we should not come to view it as something permanent. People are capable of gaining capital and therefore more power (Virnich, 2003).

In this paragraph the second sentence is the most important, since it literally answers the question. It is introduced by the first sentence and explained by the remaining sentences. Sources should always be named: in this case, the information is derived from an article by Virnich which appeared in 2003.

The answer to the first question is, however, insufficiently complete, because you intend to use the concept of *habitus* later on in your text. Therefore, you must first introduce it in a new paragraph, since this could be considered a new sub topic.

> The way in which people perceive, think and operate is what Bourdieu refers to as habitus. More often than not, a person new to a particular field – for example politics – needs to become acquainted with the prevailing culture. The longer people immerse themselves in a given field, the easier it will be for them to gain power and influence (Virnich, 2003).

The outline (list of questions) sets up the structure of the text. You will come to see that you can add paragraphs – such as the one above – without damaging the basic structure of your text.

When you have answered the other two questions in your outline, continue on to the next part in which you describe how the theory (in this case Bourdieu's theory) relates to your chosen topic and thesis question. The outline should be one for a comparative text and could look as follows:

1. What are the similarities between phenomenon X and my topic?
2. What are the differences between phenomenon X and my topic?
3. Are there more similarities or more differences?

When you have clarified the similarities and differences between phenomenon X (the concern of the theory) and your topic, you must explain why that particular theory is useful to you. Is the theory useful thanks to certain similarities or despite of certain differences? For this purpose, use a general evaluation outline by asking yourself the following questions:

1. To what extent is my choice of theory valuable to my topic and thesis question?
2. In what way is my choice of theory limited?
3. Do I need a supplementary, contrasting theory in order to be able to answer the main question?

For the other theories you should repeat the same procedure by asking yourself the same three questions. Lastly, you should write a concluding paragraph in which you clarify which theory you have chosen and

why. Perhaps to you the correlations of your chosen theory and thesis are obvious, but it would not hurt to bring them to the spotlight and clarify them once more. You could do this by formulating a number of hypotheses, or when that is more appropriate, sub-questions. The outline for this could look as follows:

1. Why are Y and Z's theories relevant to my topic and thesis question?
2. Which elements in particular?
3. Which hypotheses (or sub-questions) can therefore be formulated?

6.3 Method

Academic papers often require a practical research report. This is certainly true for Bachelor's and Master's theses which almost always require a research report. This section therefore deals with an outline suitable for describing the research plan. The purpose of such a report is to explain your method: in other words, how you conducted your research.

Start by explaining why you opted for a particular method of research. If you have used a relatively well-known method, you need not be exhaustive. If yours is less common however, you must elaborate on the what, why and how of your chosen method.

In a separate section you must recount how your research was conducted in practice. It is important to be concrete and to make sure your method is accountable, although you should not get side-tracked in minor details. This part of you text should indicate, for example, how you went about in making certain choices and setting certain limits. For example, you mention and motivate the period you are covering and specify what kind of information was gathered (and for what particular topics).

If you have used a questionnaire as your method, this should appear in full in an appendix. The same is true for interview questions and/or surveys, code books, Atlas folders, conditions of the experiments, etc. Raw data should be accessible to your lecturer or supervisor; if your research concerned a content analysis of, say, front pages of newspapers or covers of a particular magazine, you should include that material to an appendix. The same is true for interview transcripts. Make sure your appendices do not become too voluminous: for Master's theses, the raw material of data that you analyse are stored in a separate digital file and not included in the thesis proper.

Try to maintain a lively style of writing throughout, even in the sections concerning the dry matter of method. Did you find the data surprising in any way, for example because respondents spontaneously offered more information than required? Did your questions at times provoke obvious answers? Or could you sometimes deduce from the answers that your questions were not formulated specifically enough? Disclosing this kind of information shows not only what method you used, but how that method could be improved.

In conclusion, we could say that an outline for a chapter on your method of research could look as follows:

I. What method of research has been chosen/ how have research data been acquired?
II. Why is this method suitable?
III. What is the connection between the main thesis question and the chosen theory?
IV. How was the actual investigation conducted?
V. What choices were made?

6.4 Results

This section is about showing your results. Sometimes a split is made between presenting and interpreting results, but you'll find that separating the two can also feel a little artificial. Think about what works best for you and for what reasons.

Presenting quantitative data
You should present the data acquired as lucidly as possible, often with the help of specific tools such as SPSS. Tables, graphs and other figures are often useful since they clarify data at a glance. This saves you pages of writing in an attempt to describe the data. Remember that this part of your work serves to address the thesis question or the objective of your research. All too often impressive looking graphs and tables serve no clear purpose. Bear in mind that tables and graphs should be a part of the data on which you will eventually base the answer to your thesis question.
A table or graph is a separate unit of text and requires not only a title, but also a number. The latter is used for references to that particular table or graph throughout the rest of your text. With each new section the numbering of graphs, tables and illustrations starts afresh with the use of Roman numerals.

Tables and graphs need explaining. In the main text you should therefore clarify what the data of your table or graph show, in other words, what the table or graph describes and to which period of time it refers. Tables and graphs present results; how those results were acquired – or calculated – and what they could mean should be explained in the main text.

To sum up, some guidelines for processing tables, graphs and figures (for more elaborate information concerning Master's theses Media Studies: check the relevant sections of the *Methodological Guidelines*):

- Tables get a number and a title indicating what is shown, in what metrical units, and for what period of time.
- Clearly indicate what the lines, blocks and figures show.
- Large numerals are reduced to multiples of smaller numerals.
- Tables and graphs are numbered per chapter.
- Tables and graphs are preceded in the main text by a description of what data are displayed.
- Only present data relevant to your argument.
- See if certain patterns emerge.
- Devote some attention to unusual results.
- Make sure the position of the table does not interrupt your flow of reasoning.

As discussed in Chapter 5, tables, graphs and figures should in principle not be copied from other sources. Should doing so, however, be vital to your investigation, make sure you make a full reference to your source.

Presenting results from interviews or focus groups
In qualitative research, the results of interviews and focus group discussions provide the qualitative data of your thesis. They form part of the research on which you are reporting and these data should never be treated as a source of "personal communication" (as in 5.3).

So, how to do it right? Keep the following basic rules in mind: try to provide rich quotes, but focus on the essence and do not provide quotes which are very long. Use the quotes to illustrate your findings and integrate them well into your text, using double quotation marks if they are *less than* 40 words long. For quotes of over 40 words, you use a block formatting and leave out the quotation marks. Indent a few spaces from the left margin (in the same position as a new paragraph). Never use italics for quotes.

It is important in the APA code of ethics (confidentiality) that research participants cannot be identified by personal characteristics. Using pseudonyms is the preferred method, although in some cases using letters or numbers when quoting your participants could also be an option. When relevant, you can add age, sex, or role.

Some examples:

- All respondents indicate that they feel the need to communicate with their family abroad, especially in times of boredom. As Maggie puts it: "Whenever I have nothing to do, I go on Instagram to check what my sisters have been up to"

- One of the interviewees mentioned his heavy smartphone use: "I think I do overuse my smartphone sometimes. Whenever I look at my smartphone during dinner, my dad immediately says 'you are addicted!'" (Participant C, male, 18 years of age).

- The majority of the respondents (8 out of 10) seem to think that innovation cannot truly take place in a 'warm' environment of established businesses that can guide these start-ups along the way. As Bill (start-up owner, 26 years of age) said:

> Innovation works best when you are against something. In that case, you should not be in a traditional environment. I think that if you want to innovate, you need to start from scratch, open up your business in an attic, or an abandoned warehouse, where you really feel that you are swimming against the current.

Media Studies students: for more elaborate information about reporting interviews in your Master's thesis: check the relevant sections of the *Methodological Guidelines*.

Interpreting data

Data as such are not that interesting, So, never assume your data to be self-explanatory; in fact the most interesting part of your paper or thesis is probably concerned with describing how the data should be interpreted in relation to the theory discussed earlier in your paper. It is now that you can answer your thesis question.

So, just offering a quantity of data does not constitute scholarly research. Imagine seeing the results of a questionnaire filled in by 2000 Erasmus University students concerning their cinema-going habits. Without a thesis question the data would not be very meaningful. All that could be gathered is that a certain percentage of students do indeed visit the cinema on a regular basis. You therefore need a thesis question which precedes the questionnaire such as: Do students still go to the cinema as often as they did five years ago? Or: Do students go to the cinema more frequently than young people who are employed? Do more male or more female students visit the cinema? These are all comparative thesis questions. You could also search for an explanation as to why there is an increase or decrease in the number of students visiting the cinema compared to five years ago (assuming research into cinema-going habits of students conducted five years ago indeed exists). Only with such sub-questions in mind can a main thesis question be answered.

When interpreting data, beware of the pitfall of limiting yourself to the conclusion you had in mind prior to your research: don't jump to conclusions, as the expression is. Quite often more than one conclusion can be drawn from the combination of data and a particular line of reasoning. A good scholar realises that another conclusion than the one he/she has in mind is well possible. It is therefore advisable to devote some time to reviewing some other possible interpretation(s), in support of your argument about the most plausible interpretation.

6.5 Conclusions

Most of the work is now done; there is just one chapter left to write. This is the chapter in which you return to the beginning – back to the main thesis question and sub-questions. In the previous chapters you will have answered the sub-questions. This is a necessary step which will enable you to come to your conclusions. The business at hand is to formulate the answer to the main question in such a way as to expose the logical structure of your thesis. Start by answering the questions in the research outline at the beginning of this chapter with concise, clear answers. Do not be tempted to write lengthy summaries or go about "cutting and pasting," but write a short piece in which you assert why you did what and the results it delivered. One part of your conclusion should therefore answer the main thesis question. Another part should evaluate the theory you used: did it prove suitable? Do your results validate the theory or expose it as insufficient for this type of research? In short, this is the time to reflect on the theory used. You must also comment on the method you used or indicate its restrictions.

In the concluding chapter you are not to introduce anything new, be it topics, questions, or facts, though you are free to make suggestions for further research. In the course of your investigation, after all, you may have stumbled across interesting phenomena which raise new questions on your topic.

A scholarly text contributes to the scholarly discussion on a particular topic.

Conclusions usually take up about 10% of a paper, so for a Master's thesis, the Conclusion usually is about 5-7pages. As a guide, you could use the following outline:

I. Precisely which phenomenon has been researched?
II. What is the answer to the main thesis question? (argued as concisely as possible)
III. Which theory was used, and did it prove suitable?
IV. Which method was used, and why was it appropriate?
V. In what way was the investigation limited?
VI. Is further research desirable?

This chapter has dealt with composing and structuring your research paper or thesis. However, such a text is only convincing if your argumentation is solid. The following chapter therefore answers the following questions: what are valid arguments and how do you present them?

7 Argumentation

In Chapter 1 we saw that statements containing an idea, claim, opinion, or conclusion must be supported by solid arguments (see 1.2). Though you may not realise it, even the most sober research papers are suffused with such statements which are in turn supported by arguments or reasoning. This means the structure of your research paper or thesis must be logical and lucid; only in this way can the reader follow your train of thought and be convinced of the plausibility of your conclusions.

Your thesis not only contains ideas derived from others, but also ideas, conclusions, and claims originating from your own mind. Though this may sound like a mysterious itinerary, nothing could be further from the truth. Thinking and reasoning are rational processes and should be easy to follow. Good argumentation determines the quality of a research report.

The absolute truth?

Many people believe that the reason why argumentation is so important is because findings or insights must be proven to be "true." However, this is not what the sciences are about. Scholars and scientists mostly do not intend to prove the truth of their ideas, but rather aim at presenting plausible conclusions. This is certainly the case for scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The British philosopher of science and moral reasoning Stephen Toulmin states that argumentation is an attempt to justify one's claims (Eemeren, Grootendorst & Henkemans, 1997, p. 169). If you are unable to validate a claim by referring to others who have come to similar conclusions, you will have to find a way of convincing your audience by aiming for plausibility.

The first step is formulating your claim. The second step is supporting your claim with data derived from empirical research, scholarly texts, or from common knowledge. Argumentation does not stop here, as you still need explain why exactly the particular data or academic writings can be taken to support your claim or justify your conclusion(s).

The quality of your discourse depends on the validity of your arguments.

Types of arguments

In common usage, arguing has rather negative connotations, such as wanting to drive home your point by any means or debating relentlessly. In an academic or philosophical context, however, arguing is the same as reasoning and involves questions on the nature of evidence. Argumentation concerns processes of induction and deduction. Because there are different types of evidence, we could say that there are different types of reasoning.

7.1 Valid reasoning

In order to convince the reader of the plausibility of your claim or conclusion, it is vital that your reasoning is valid. When is this the case? It depends on which type of argument (argumentation outline) you use. A sound discourse can be built on the scaffolding of four basic types of argumentation. An argument or line of reasoning usually takes the form of:

I. Deduction or induction
II. Causality (predicting and explaining)
III. Comparison
IV. Typifying or characterising

In the examples below, note the use of connectives such as: because of, hence, due to, etc. In argumentation theory these words are called argumentative indicators, because they indicate which type of argument is being used. Chapter 8 offers a pretty complete list of connectives that can also be used as argumentative indicators.

I Inductive and deductive arguments

Consensus on certain issues exists in all academic areas. The natural sciences have a number of mathematical and physical laws at their disposal from which new information can be deduced by aspiring scientists. The case is somewhat different for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Scholars in these academic disciplines are aware of Pythagoras' theory, the law of gravity, and Archimedes' law, but these laws are not particularly useful to them in their academic work. Yet a number of theories in the Social Sciences are generally accepted and function in a similar way as the laws of the natural sciences. Deriving new claims or insights from such theories is called deductive argumentation.

- *Because* Bourdieu demonstrated that people who have a degree of cultural capital at their disposal can exercise influence, it is plausible that fashion designers working for large fashion houses can exercise influence on company policy.
- According to the Author theory, a film director is the most important person in the production process. *Hence* critics who adhere to this theory view camerawork as bearing the director's signature, rather than that of the camera operator.

Perhaps without realising it, we spend a lot of our time deducing information when conversing on a day-to-day basis, that is, outside any academic context. As soon as we assume something based on common knowledge or derived from a generally accepted opinion, we are in fact using a form of deduction. Here, too, we revert to shared knowledge about accepted laws if we wish to convince another person of our line of reasoning; whether this be legislature, natural laws, or so-called unwritten laws (morals and values). Some examples:

- You must have your car insured *because* motoring legislation dictates that you do so.
- You can't go skating *because* the ice is too thin.
- He broke our agreement; that's just not acceptable!

You could also appeal to the unwritten rule of a particular phenomenon ('isn't that always the case?'). This law is based on experience. For example: as a rule, electronic gadgets always cost more when they first appear on the market and become cheaper over time. Hence you could deduce that it is inadvisable to buy an electronic gadget when it has just appeared on the market.

- It is advisable not to buy an electronic device when it has just appeared on the market. Wait about six months, and you'll pay a lot less.

Deductive argumentation means arriving at a conclusion based on a general rule.

Sometimes deduction is not possible because there is no law or theory, as yet, to explain a particular phenomenon. In such a case, experimental or empirical research can be conducted in an attempt to develop

a theory or law. The procedure is the opposite of deduction and is called *inductive reasoning:* by examining a great number of similar cases, the researcher hopes to discover a fixed rule or law. If the experiment or empirical investigation is properly executed, the result could become a generally accepted law or theory.

You must, however, err on the side of caution when it comes to inducing since it is easy to draw conclusions too hastily. Consider the following:

- BBC journalist are known to have left-wing sympathies. We can *therefore* conclude that journalists are primarily Labour Party voters.

This line of reasoning is inductive; a general rule is distilled based on a number of individual cases (BBC journalists with left-wing sympathies). Yet we can question this line of reasoning: the number of investigated cases is limited, BBC journalists are not representative of all journalists, and the conclusion has therefore been hastily drawn.

An invalid line of reasoning however does not tell you much about the validity of the statement; we could simply say that the argumentation is wrong. In such a case you need to provide other arguments to justify your claim.

Still, presenting valid arguments does not guarantee a solid conclusion. Since the research part of your thesis is obviously limited, it is advisable not to formulate your conclusion in absolute terms. Rather, you could decide to phrase your conclusion in terms of: *it is therefore plausible to conclude that…it seems likely ... it appears to be the case.....*

Inductive argumentation means inferring a law or general rule from a number of isolated cases.

II Predicting and explaining

Reasoning involves making connections and establishing correlations. You postulate a causal relationship when you see one thing as the cause of something else. This can be done in two ways, by making a prediction or by postulating a cause or explanation. Consider:

- *If* the BBC ceases to exist, *then* current affairs programmes will disappear.

This sentence is an example of causal reasoning that expresses a prediction. Two events are named: the disappearance of the BBC, which then causes the second event: the disappearance of current affairs programmes. The cause is in the present, the result in the future. Predicting something, however, is risky business. Before you do so, you must scrutinize whether your predicted outcome is plausible. It is not unlikely, for example, that other, commercial channels will fill the gap and start producing current affairs programmes.

You can also explain the reason why a situation in the present has come about. In this case, you are postulating a cause.

- A drastic decline in newspaper prescriptions is occurring *because* an increasing number of people have begun to derive their information from the internet.

This line of reasoning explains a phenomenon: the cause lies in the past and the result in the present. Still, you might wonder whether this is the only valid explanation. When attempting to discover the cause of a particular phenomenon, remember that complex problems almost always have more than one cause. Now the risk is that you unjustifiably label something that precedes a particular situation as the cause of it.

- With the emergence of the internet, the number of people who read newspapers has decreased.

What does this sentence mean exactly? No more than what it literally states: that the number of people who read newspapers has decreased with the rise of the internet. It does not claim that the internet is the cause of the decreasing number of people who read newspapers, though it does give that impression. If, in this case, you feel that the internet is in fact the cause, you will have to prove the connection! When you can do so convincingly, you must use the argumentative indicator *because of*.

Causal relations are established when you name the cause of a particular phenomenon or predict a certain outcome

III Comparing

If your aim is to prove the plausibility of a claim by comparing one situation to another, you must argue on the basis of comparison or analogy.

- First and second class distinction on trains should be put an end to. On buses, trams, and the underground such a distinction does not exist either.

If you don't want to be accused of comparing apples and oranges, you must ask yourself whether the two phenomena correlate sufficiently. This is indeed the case in the example quoted here, since trains, buses, trams, and the underground all belong to the domain of public transport. There is however, a crucial difference: travelling by train usually covers a greater distance than travelling by tram, underground or bus. This factor may justify the distinction between first and second class seats. It is therefore advisable to consider whether a crucial difference exists which might cancel out the analogy. Your reasoning is enhanced by such considerations, even if you decide they are not crucial after all.

Personal opinion

In debates about subsidies for cultural organizations such as theatre companies, the argument that rock concert tickets are not subsidised either is sometimes put forward. If you wish to assess such a debate, you must be cautious not to voice your personal opinion on the topic, especially if, for example, you much prefer going to rock concerts than to the theatre! Arguing is a rational activity, hence be sure to look for rational arguments.

IV Typifying and characterising

Sometimes we typify or characterise certain categories or groups. People can be classified into groups such as students or women; animals into groups such as birds or insects. This also counts for objects: bicycles, newspapers, or more abstract matters such as ideas and theories. Each group or class is known for certain characteristics.

- That information must be reliable, *as* it appeared in quality newspaper *The Guardian.*

This line of reasoning is based on a presupposed characteristic. But is it true that *The Guardian* is always a reliable source of information? And does the same count for other quality newspapers?

- It is a waste that there are so many pop music stations, *because* young people don't listen to the radio as much as elderly people.

If you scrutinise this line of reasoning, you will see that it holds the presupposed belief that only young people enjoy listening to pop music. Before you can use this statement as an argument to validate your hypothesis, you would first have to investigate whether or not it is actually true. In this case too, a weak argument does not necessarily mean that your point of view in invalid. However, you would do well to formulate a new argument to support your point of view.

7.2 Argumentative indicators

Specific words indicate whether or not a text is argumentative. There are terms, for instance, which introduce a claim, opinion, hypothesis, or conclusion. We call these words opinion indicators.

Claim, opinion, assertion, conclusion: point of view

It is therefore possible to explicitly indicate when you are about to reveal your point of view. The following phrases are opinion indicators: *in my opinion, I believe, I would say, according to Bourdieu, it is plausible/likely that, it seems that, we could infer that, it appears to, the conclusion seems justifiable....*

There are also phrases that introduce an argument. These phrases are called argumentative indicators.

Justification, reasoning, supportive statements: argumentation

Examples of argumentative indicators are: *this is caused by, the reason for this, this is the reason why, because, that is why, as, since, after all, due to, likewise, similarly, also, moreover, just as, compared to…*

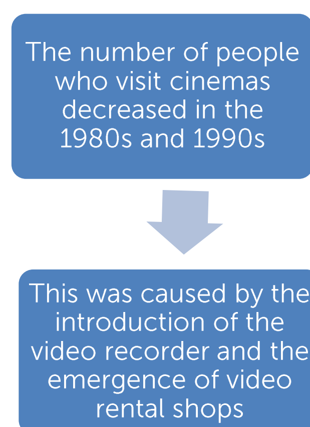
Finally, there are also phrases that introduce data justifying or supporting your argument.

Facts, evidence, proof, information: data

Data are often introduced with phrases such as: *based on, this is evident from, the following figures validate…* Since it is not always necessary to be this explicit you need not always use these indicators. You should, however, be able to add them in thought, in order to check whether the line of reasoning or argumentation is valid.

7.3 Basic argumentative structures

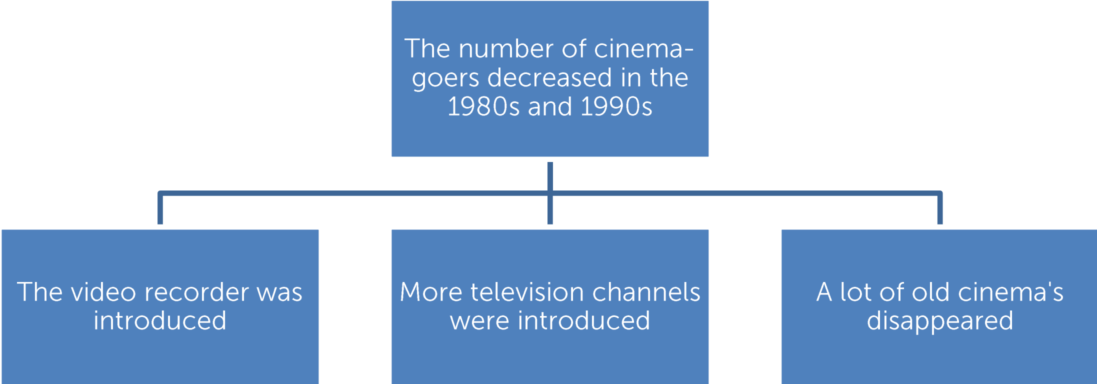
Sometimes you need only one argument in support of your claim. This is sufficient, provided your line of reasoning is not too complex.



In the above example, the argument forms the explanation for a particular phenomenon. This argument is based on causality, i.e. the cause of a smaller number of cinema-goers has been the introduction and

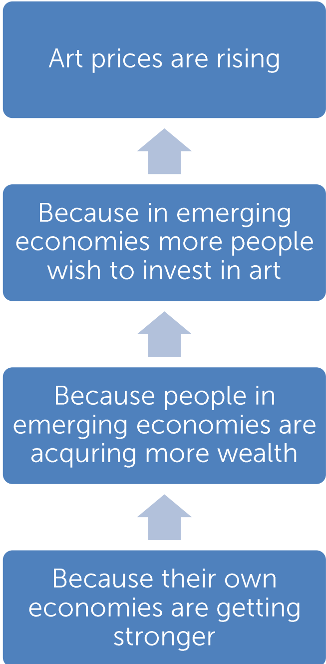
distribution of the video recorder. Video rental is of course closely connected to this. However: is that the only reason?

Usually an argument is more elaborate. In the following example there are three arguments that support the same claim. They are not subjected to one another, but are situated alongside one another, thereby working together to solidify the argument.



One main argument and complex argumentation

Thus far we have looked at arguments that directly support a claim or opinion. Often, arguments also need to be supported in turn. Consider the following example.



Here the claim is that art prices are rising, which is supported by a main argument (because in emerging economies more people wish to invest in art) which in turn is supported by yet another argument and yet another. Although three arguments are provided, the line of reasoning remains tricky, because if for example the main argument is invalid (it is not true that more people wish to invest in art in emerging economies; rather, the number of people has remained the same over the last 20 years), the entire chain needs to be reconsidered.

Make sure you provide more than one main argument when seeking to support an important hypothesis.

Argumentation is an important part of thesis writing, whether it be at paragraph or chapter level. In the course of your writing you will have undoubtedly used different types of argumentation, referred to various types of sources including previously conducted research on your topic; you will have compared, predicted, explained, and labelled on grounds of specific characteristics.

Effective argumentation means uncovering relationships between phenomena. This requires a lot of brainwork since it is of vital importance to formulate your findings clearly. In its final form, a text must be self-explanatory. An often heard comment from students when they examine corrected work is: "what I meant to say was…"

Make sure you write down exactly what your mean. To make sure that you do, read the following chapter… preferably more than once.

8 Clear Thinking, Clear Writing

This chapter deals with the practice of writing in English. Like any other practice, writing is governed by rules and conventions, concerning for example issues of style, grammar, and spelling. To begin with the latter: spelling in English is notoriously difficult and you will have to accustom yourself to using a good English language dictionary and of course the spell check programme on your computer. Decide beforehand whether you prefer to follow conventions of British (UK) or American English for vocabulary, some minor grammatical issues, and spelling. It stands to reason to opt for British English within a European context of scholarship and writing, but you are free to make your own choices, as long as you are consistent. In other words, you must avoid writing both *honour* and *flavor* in the same text.

Matters of style and grammar can also cause some problems. Bear in mind that writing is an art which needs a lot of practice. You learn to write well by doing it very often, which does not necessarily mean that you should write many different pieces. Rather, you could focus on rewriting, an essential feature in mastering the practice of writing. While you are about it, you may wish to consult these pages. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to deal thoroughly with the rules of English grammar and style. Rather, it tries to convey some basic tips about structuring your work and writing both attractively and well.

8.1 Indicating structure: reference words and connectives

Not a single sentence in a text stands all by itself. Sentences are related to one another. Reference words make sure that those relations are clear and unmistakable; pronouns, demonstratives and adverbs economise your sentences and contribute to variation. They are used when some new information is added to the things they refer to.

- *More than 1 million people* came to protest against the war. **They** thronged the streets in large numbers.
- I was able to interview the director of the *new theatre on the Thames*, **which** opened last month. The river **there** is bridged by a narrow footbridge.
- *Sociology* is a quite recent Academic discipline. **It** dates from the early twentieth century. *During the 1960s* **it** began to draw ever greater numbers of students. **In those years**, there was.....

You will realise that in referring to parts of a previous sentence (called “antecedents”), the distance bridged should not be too great. To avoid confusion, you could use clear synonyms or recur to the original phrases if the gap consists of more than three sentences.

To sum up, you can refer to

- People (pronouns, possessives, and demonstratives): *I, you, she, he, we, they; my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs*
- Objects (both concrete and abstract matters) and animals: it, its, they, theirs, this, that, these, those

- Point in time: then, at the time, in those days, in future
- Place: there, here, the following

In addition, you can use reference words to compare or indicate similarity: the same, also, another, other, both, similar, better, worse, more, earlier, later, previous, subsequent.

Using references words well makes your writing fluent and attractive.

Connectives

Sentences are related to one another by using pronouns, demonstratives, and the like. It is, however, also possible to indicate the *nature* of the relation between two sentences or phrases. Such words or phrases indicate a connection and are called indicators (as in the previous chapter), transition words, or more generally **connectives**. They are frequently used in English and you must try and make it habit to step into the tracks of that tradition. Using connectives greatly enhances the structure of your written work on sentence and paragraph level. What follows is a list of different types of connectives. You will easily recognise most of them. If you are not sure about the exact meaning or usage of these words and phrases, you must consult a comprehensive English language dictionary.

Addition

- Also, too, as well as, both … and, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, again.
  *These connectives occur frequently in multiple argumentation (Chapter 7).

Consequence

- Accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, otherwise, so then, therefore, thus, thereupon.
  *These connectives are indicators of deductive and inductive reasoning, or type I arguments (Chapter 7)

Summarising

- After all, all in all, all things considered, when all is said and done, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarise, finally.
  *These connectives occur both in deductive and inductive argumentation and, more generally, in concluding paragraphs.

Generalizing

- As a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, mainly, on the whole, in general, by and large, ordinarily, usually.
  *Used in typifying or characterising arguments (type IV arguments, Chapter 7). Also used in profile description outlines (chapter 2.3)

Restatement

- In essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently, to wit, in plain English, strictly speaking.
  *With these connectives you vary your writing, which often has an enlivening effect.

Comparison

- In contrast, by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, equally, in the same way, similarly, compared with, like, moreover.
  *Used in type III arguments: comparisons (Chapter 7)

Contrast

- unlike, whereas, on the one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, nonetheless, in contrast, unless, except, despite, in spite of, apart from, as long as.
  *Used in type III arguments: comparisons (Chapter 7)

Concession

- Although, though, however, in spite of.
  * Used in type III arguments: comparisons (Chapter 7)

Cause and effect

- because, due to, owing to, the reason why, since, so, therefore, thus, consequently, as a result of, hence, if ... then.
  *Used in type I and II arguments: inductions, deduction, predictions and clarifications (Chapter 7).

Emphasis

- Above all, most of all, mainly, notably, particularly, in particular, especially, significantly, indeed, in fact, in truth, truly.
  *These connectives are used to dress up your writing.

Sequence

- First, second(ly), third(ly), finally, at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, in addition, moreover, finally, at the same time, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, the meantime, later, while, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion.
  *Variation is sometimes required in sequences, to avoid dull repetition. So, instead of listing your arguments as follows: First, second, third....., you begin the first argument with “First,” the next with “in addition,” or “moreover,” and the last with “finally.”

Diversion:

- By the way, incidentally.
  *These connectives are used to dress up your writing and introduce a digression.

Illustration

- For example, for instance, for one thing, such as, as revealed by, as shown by, in the case of.
  *Needless to say, these connectives introduce specific instances of a particular phenomenon and examples in general.

Direction

- The above-mentioned, in the following, below, later, here, there, over there, beyond, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance.
  *The first four connectives listed here are used as signal posts in your text.

8.2 Style: sentence level

Writing long sentences

Can we have long sentences in English? The answer is yes, we can, but there are certain conditions. It all depends on clarity. In academic papers your aim is to argue, convince, or convey certain information. Naturally, this can only be achieved by a clear and consistent style. It is no problem to produce the occasional long sentence – as long as the sentence structure is clear and obvious. The sentence is too long

when readers have to cut their way through a tangle of subordinate clauses and need to read the sentence twice in order to grasp its meaning. Starting your sentence with a long subordinate clause is not very practical in English writing; it is better to move such clauses towards the end of your sentence. So try and avoid something like this:

> And whereas a sociological approach which emphasises the differences between classes of men and women in society in terms of their respective social position within economic structures and the mechanisms of oppression within them, hence making the subject's experiences dependent on epistemic privilege and taking that as the starting point for further research, has significantly contributed to the politicisation of these experiences, it is not, for two reasons, the approach I am relying on in the present research paper.

Apart from the stylistic error of beginning the sentence with a conversational "and," the student who wrote it wants to cram too much information into a single sentence. The subordinate clause (whereas...) is burdensome because it contains another (relative) clause (which...) and continuous with yet two other subordinate clauses (making....and taking....) before reaching closure (experiences). The subordinate clause is about 5 times as long as the main clause! The thing to do here is to rewrite that subordinate clause and turn parts of it into a main clause. So, when revising your work before handing it in, it makes sense to cut up some sentences. By separating one or two subordinate clauses, you could make two or three sentences out of one.

Clarity in style reflects clarity of thought.

Avoiding dull texts

It is advisable, then, to avoid writing convoluted sentences. Yet a succession of short sentences without any subordinate clause makes for dull reading. People are rhythmical beings and a constant drone of staccato effects has the benefit of clarity on the expense of persuasive power. If you lose your audience, you lose your argument.

Two principles of writing may serve to captivate your reader. The first is to make sure you alternate brief and succinct sentences with longer, more elaborate sentences. The second is to aim for a style in which passive and active constructions alternate. In an active construction the emphasis is on the subject who is doing something. In a passive construction the emphasis is rather on what is done, or the doing itself, not on the original subject.

- In this paper, I intend to focus on the National Theatre's different funding channels.

This is an active construction and the emphasis is on "me," author and researcher. It is certainly possible, though not obligatory, to refer to yourself actively in the introduction of your paper; a passive construction might feel twisted here.

- A fan site for "The X-factor" in the Netherlands was launched in 2006.

The passive construction here puts emphasis on the origin of the fan site, not on those behind it. Academic writing tends to favour the passive voice, as it generally discusses phenomena, not persons. However, active constructions are certainly possible, for instance when discussing responses to questionnaires or when recounting a scholarly debate.

Do not use contractions
Academic writing is subject to all kinds of conventions. One such a convention is that all verb phrases must be written in full. In other words, you must not use contractions. This takes some getting used to, especially in the case of negatives:

- Does not, are not, did not, cannot (note the spelling here!).....

But also:
- It is, they are, you are, I am......

Word order
Word order is notoriously difficult if English is not your native language. Entire chapters of grammar books are devoted to this issue. Some rules of thumb:

Verb and object normally go together:

- I came to Rotterdam because I enjoy its international flavour so much
  (Not: because I enjoy so much its international flavour)

Place precedes time

- She has been practising photography in Rotterdam since January 2008.

Adverbs or adverb phrases usually appear before the verb, but after the verb *to be*. If there is more than one verb (a compound verb) they usually appear after the first verb.

- I read the article and *also searched* for more material.
- You *are always* on time.
- He had *really* forgotten all about it.

Punctuation
There are a number of different uses for commas in English. Commas are used to separate a list of items. This is one of the most common uses of a comma. Notice that a comma is included before the conjunction "and" which comes before the final element of a list.

- I like reading, listening to music, taking long walks, and visiting with my friends.

Commas are also used to separate phrases (clauses). This is especially true after a beginning dependent clause.

- Although he wanted to come, he wasn't able to attend the course.

Long prepositional phrases are also followed by a comma.

- In order to qualify for your degree, you must write a Bachelor's thesis.

Commas separate two independent clauses that are connected by a conjunction such as 'but'.

- They wanted to purchase a new car, but their financial situation would not allow it.

They are also used in non-defining relative clauses.

- Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, comes from Seattle.

Note that no comma is used for separating defining relative clauses. Defining relative clauses are, contrary to non-defining clauses, essential for a proper understanding of the sentence or noun they refer to (=define).

- The book on the dynamics of cultural statistics (which/that) you lent me is very interesting.

In defining relative clauses the relative pronoun which, who, or that can be omitted if it is the object of the clause. In British written English the relative pronoun *which* is preferred to *that*. In American written English it is perfectly possible and often preferable to use *that*, though not to refer to people.

Semicolon
There are two uses for a semicolon. The first is to separate two independent clauses. One or both of the clauses are short and the ideas expressed are usually very similar.

- He loves studying; He can't get enough of school.

Semicolons are also used to separate groups of words that are themselves separated by commas or in enumerations consisting of phrases, rather than words.

- I took a holiday and played tennis, which I love; read a lot, which I needed to do; and slept late, which I hadn't done for quite a while.

When to use quotation marks and when italics
See Chapter 5.2 for using quotation marks when quoting. Further uses for quotation marks are for introducing terms ironically or terms that are an invented or known expression, and when mentioning the title of an article or chapter (you do not have to mention these titles because of the author-date system, but occasionally you might wish to highlight a specific title).

- When introducing “quote within a quote,” you should ….
- Kavaratzis and Ashworth seminal article “City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick?” (2005) points the way to…

Do not use quotation marks when introducing a technical term or key term. Instead, italicize these terms the first time you use them.

- The most important sentence in a paragraph is called the *topic sentence*.
- The distinction between *sex* and *gender* commonly refers to….

8.3 Style: word level

Abstract or concrete
Texts containing a lot of general and abstract terms easily become obscure and inaccessible. On the other hand, texts containing solely concrete and specific words appear to lack the necessary academic level. You must try to find the golden mean between abstract and concrete, between general and specific. A way to achieve this is to restate rather vague or abstract passages in a subsequent sentence, by using a concrete example. Such a strategy enlivens the text and dispels ambiguity.

	Concrete	Abstract
General	Media	Communication
Specific	The Sun	The yellow press

Synonyms
English is one of the richest languages in the world and it is a good idea to try and enliven your text by bringing some variety to your vocabulary. You could try to use the "thesaurus" (or synonyms) function of your Word programme, or consult a thesaurus in book form, or search for one on the internet. *Roget's Thesaurus* is a classic in this respect and also has an online version. Beware of the slips in meaning which can occur if you decide to opt for a synonym. It is rarely the case that the synonym really has exactly the same meaning as the original word! Also make sure to check your synonym belongs to the same register of writing, as popular language should be avoided in an academic paper. In the case of academic terms, it is best to avoid confusion and stick to one or two clear terms for what you are describing.

Numbers
If numbers constitute a basic element of your research, you note them as numerals (except at the beginning of a sentence). Otherwise, in historical surveys for example, you write out the number in words, but only for numbers below 10. Time periods such as decades or centuries are noted in numerals, unless it is an approximation

- The 19th century
- The 1980s
- About five years after the event

Compound Words
Contrary to other Germanic languages, English tends to keep compound nouns separate:

- Case study
- Film production
- Government policy
- Mass media

8.4 Style: some general aspects

Use an objective style of writing
Academic work is about results and facts and is not oriented on expressing one's personal opinion. English academic convention is keen on maintaining the veneer of objectivity. So it is not done to draw attention to yourself, even if you have done a brilliant discovery. In other words, saying *I* is reserved for those parts of your paper which are explicitly concerned with you as the investigator or author. Even here, you are advised to use *I* sparingly. Saying *we* if you really mean *I* or something like "you and me, the scholarly community" is considered a deadly sin. You may only refer to *we* if your paper has multiple authors.

An objective style naturally focuses the reader's attention on the outcome of a scholarly process. Compare the following:

- Because I wanted to get a complete picture of Dutch actors' career expectations, I decided to ask all of them to fill out a questionnaire.....
- In order to acquire a complete picture of Dutch actors' career expectations, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire....

By distancing yourself from the general picture, you make clear that your own opinions or expectations are not important: this is a serious piece of research. If you refer to similar research using similar methods, your own work becomes even more accountable.

Tense

The past tense is reserved for historical surveys or a narrative style. For instance, if you want to sketch the historical background of a current war because you are writing about media coverage, you could use the past tense. Or if you report (narrate) on your findings. Make sure to be consistent! Otherwise, stick to the present. This is also the rule for a theoretical survey or a discussion of several theoretical approaches, even if the author you are referring to wrote his work decades ago:

- Almost half (46 %) of the respondents answered that ...
- Anderson (1991) argues in his book *Imagined Communities*....

Well-written chapters

A well-written chapter contains a proper introduction and conclusion. In order to avoid the risk of becoming repetitive, you could describe what the reader can expect in an introductory paragraph. Towards the end of the chapter, you could focus on the results of your argument or your findings in a concluding paragraph of, at most, ten lines. You could also write one or two lines to announce the next chapter. In the concluding chapter to your thesis, you could subsequently use these concluding passages to build a proper conclusion to your work.

9 Formal requirements

9.1 General requirements and layout

When you have gone to the trouble of buying someone a present, you add the finishing touch by wrapping it up and presenting it attractively. Similarly, your thesis deserves to be presented with care. This does not mean pulling out all the stops: a showy presentation of your work will not make your text more attractive.

Only use functions such as *italics* or **bold** when necessary. In the main text, stick to a 12-point font that is pleasant to the eye, such as Garamond, Times Roman, or Calibri.

Your work must be presented on A4 paper – including the cover!

Level(s) of writing

The layout should clearly indicate the structure of a chapter. Therefore, make sure your style is consistent at all levels of your thesis: when it comes to titles of chapters, paragraph headings, and captions, use the same layout but different font sizes. You can take recourse to the Style menu in Word, which is also quite useful for generating your Contents pages.

Bold

Only use bold print for titles of chapters and paragraphs. Though useful in instructive texts, they look over the top in narrative texts. A good writer does not need bold print to indicate how a sentence should be read. You could use italics to emphasize a word, though this should only be done *very* occasionally!

More on italics

Use italics for specific key terms or terms derived from another language that do not appear in ordinary English disctionaries. You need do that only once. Sometimes, italics can be used by way of emphasis, for instance to indicate opposites: *before* rather than *after*.

Underlining

Using underlining stems from the days of typewriters when such functions as italics or bold could not be had. Underlining has become obsolete since.

Starting a new paragraph:

Indent the first line of every paragraph, also of a first paragraph in a chapter or section. Us the tab key (5 spaces) to indent consistently.

Sections and sub-sections
Dividing your paper up into sections and sub-sections usually creates a clear structure. Make sure though that those sections contain more than one paragraph, so avoid over structuralising your text. Write for each (sub) section a heading; in theses these are usually numbered. Insert an additional spaced line between the heading and the text that precedes it, but not between the heading and the text that follows it.

Contents page
Only if the paper is longer than 8000 words. For best results and to avoid having to alter page numbers manually after some changes in the text, use a Style Menu and the automatically generated Table of Contents function in Word.

Line spacing
Use 1.5 line spacing for all sections of your paper or thesis, so including the abstract, references, table of contents, and appendixes.

Illustrations
There are two main reasons for adding illustrations: either to enliven a text or enlighten it. If you want to enliven your text with photos or illustrations: go ahead, as long as you reveal your sources meticulously (see chapter 5). You need not refer to these images in the main text. If they are relevant to your argumentation however, make sure you place them as close to that part of the text as possible. Remember to number the images, refer to the source and make certain that you are in fact permitted to reproduce them.

Appendices
Appendices are not numbered in the same way as chapters; instead they are given letters (A, B, C, etc.). Tables and graphs in an appendix should also be numbered (Table B1, B2, etc.). Make sure you use appendices sparingly: only include that which is vital to the assessment of your research report. Don't be tempted to include information simply because it makes for an interesting read! For specific use of appendices in the Master's Thesis, see the relevant sections in the *Methodological Guidelines* for MA/MSc students Media Studies.

The finishing touch
When you see the end nearing, there are still a few things you need to do:

1. Check whether all your headings are stylistically correct. Have you distinguished between titles of chapters, sections and sub sections?
2. Are chapter headings and page numbers consistent with those in on the contents page?
3. Check spelling and grammar one more time: be consistent!
4. Check your reference list. Is it complete? Has it been constructed according to the rules set out in chapter 5?

Last of all, use the following checklist to ensure the layout of your work meets the compulsory requirements.

9.2 Checklist: layout and other formal requirements

1. More than 2000 words? Use a title page. Give the following data:
   Assignment number and title, name, student number, your group (if applicable), the course title, course number, the name of your lecturer, and the word count.
2. Fewer than 2000 words? Do not include a title page and state all the above-mentioned data on your first page.
3. Please note that it is not allowed to copypaste the Erasmus University logo into your title page or heading.
4. Use an 11 or 12 point plain and commonly used font (Times Roman, Garamond, Calibri, Arial).
5. Indent the first line of each new paragraph and do not add an extra line space between paragraphs.
6. Use 1.5 line spacing for all sections of your paper or thesis.
7. Align only the left margin and leave the right margin ragged (uneven). So do not justify your lines on both sides. Use a 2.5 - 3 centimetre margin.
8. If your paper is divided into chapters (this is mostly the case for papers longer than 8000 words), each new chapter should start on a new page.
9. Papers divided into chapters should include a clear contents page with page references.
10. Sources are referred to correctly and consistently (see chapter 5).
11. Insert page numbers, using the option in Word. Start numbering after the title page.

A Bachelor's or Master's thesis requires at least the following:

1. A separate title page which includes:

   - Thesis title
   - University, school, and department
   - Name of student
   - Student number
   - Name of supervisor
   - Date of thesis

2. Correct page numbering, beginning directly after the contents page.
3. Correct contents page
4. An alphabetised list of abbreviations (if necessary)
5. An alphabetised reference list (check whether all references in the text are included)
6. Correct and consistent references to sources in the text (see chapter 5)

Note that for Master's theses the *Methodological Guideline to Thesis Res*earch and the relevant *Course Guide Master Thesis are leading*.

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