

# 10 BEST PRACTICES FOR / DISSERTATIONS /

RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION

01

*You are going to be stuck with this project for a long time. Take your time and make sure to pick a compelling topic that will get you through the long process.*

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOPIC



DO THIS

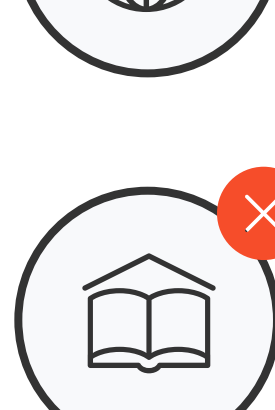


DON'T DO THIS



### GENUINE INTEREST

Pick something you have a real interest in, like issues you care about.



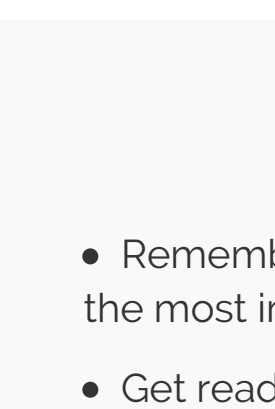
### BROAD TOPICS

Narrow down your focus within a discipline so that you hit your mark when done.



### ORIGINALITY

Choose a topic that is unique and not over saturated by other scholars.



### NO PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Be original, but make sure your topic has previous research so you have evidence.

## ACTIONS POINTS

- Ask your professor or adviser for help if you are stuck choosing a topic.
- Make sure that your topic has adequate background research before committing to it.
- Create a short list of topics you care about, then go from there.
- Remember that your topic choice is one of the most important parts of the process.
- Get ready for the long haul!
- Be prepared to change your topic based on the above mentioned negative factors.

02

*When it comes to creating a structure (or format) for your document, don't re-invent the wheel. Stick with working on each section as described below.*

## KNOW THE STRUCTURE

Each section is known as a "chapter" of the whole dissertation. By focusing on one part at a time, you can work in more manageable 'chunks.'

### DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

Initial Proposal (optional in some cases)

Introduction

Literature Review

Methodology

Body Chapters

Results and Discussion

Conclusion

References

Appendix

03

*Plan out your work accordingly into a neat outline so that you know what sections you have to work on and the overall scope of the project.*

## CREATE AN OUTLINE

### My Outline

#### I. Introduction

- Background information
- Thesis overview

#### II. Literature Review

- Source #1
- Source #2

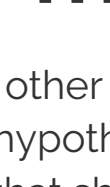
#### III. Methodology

#### IV. Results

...



Let your adviser review it to let you know if you are on the right track.



Be like the solar system and "plan-et" out. Seriously, no great dissertation was ever written without a good plan of attack.



Be as thorough as possible and indicate exactly what you are going to write about in each section by adding a brief description for each list item.

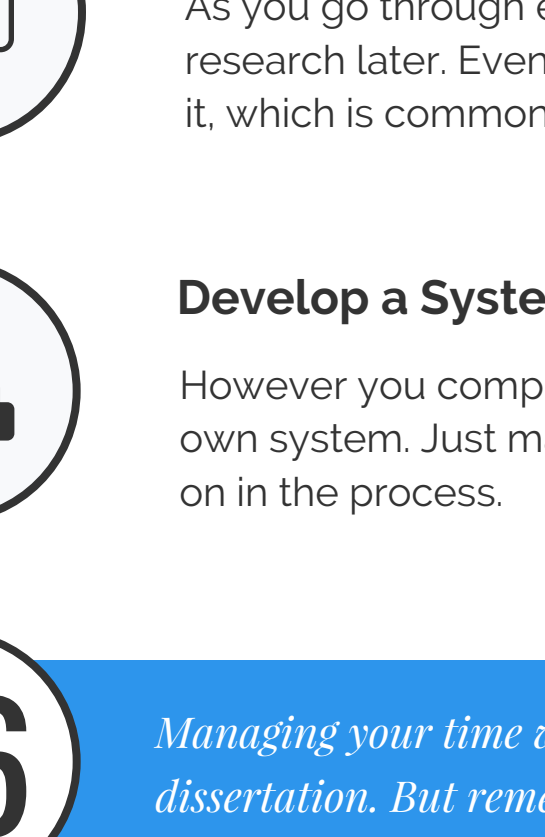
04

*The majority of your time (75%) should be spent doing research on your topic. If you do this part right, the writing portion will be easier.*

## CONDUCT PROPER AND THOROUGH RESEARCH

Be ruthless in your research activities. Read what other scholars have said and try to find unique data sets and compelling arguments that support your hypothesis. Spend most of your time researching and only use the most credible sources (that should be available to you for free).

### Time Allocation Chart



### Best Source Databases

Try and use these resources to get started.

EBSCOhost

JSTOR

Campus library

ProQuest

Google Scholar

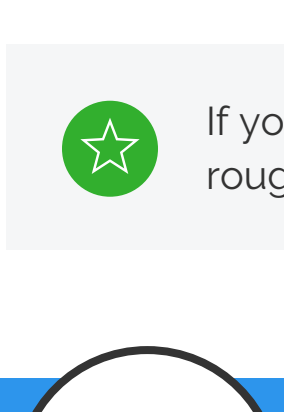
05

*Save lots of time by compiling your sources as you go. This is especially important for the literature review portion. Use notecards or develop your own system to organize sources.*

## COMPILE SOURCES AS YOU GO

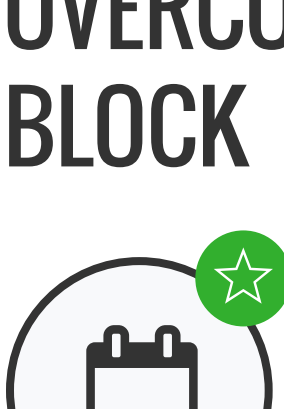


DO NOT wait until you are done writing to compile your sources. You will lose precious time.



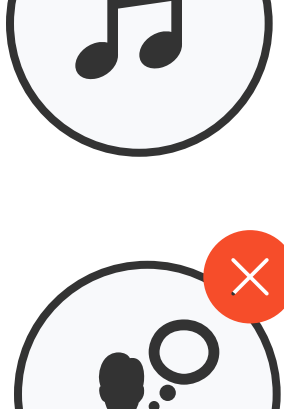
### Using Notecards

For every source, make a notecard with all of the relevant information about the source as well as how you plan to use it in your research. 3 X 5 index cards work well, or you can keep a spreadsheet or other digital format.



### Save "Quotable" Material

As you go through each source, collect and organize quotes you can use to cite research later. Even if you don't end up using the quote itself you can still paraphrase it, which is common in APA format.



### Develop a System

However you compile sources, do it on the fly and don't be afraid to develop your own system. Just make sure to stick with it because you will have to find things later on in the process.

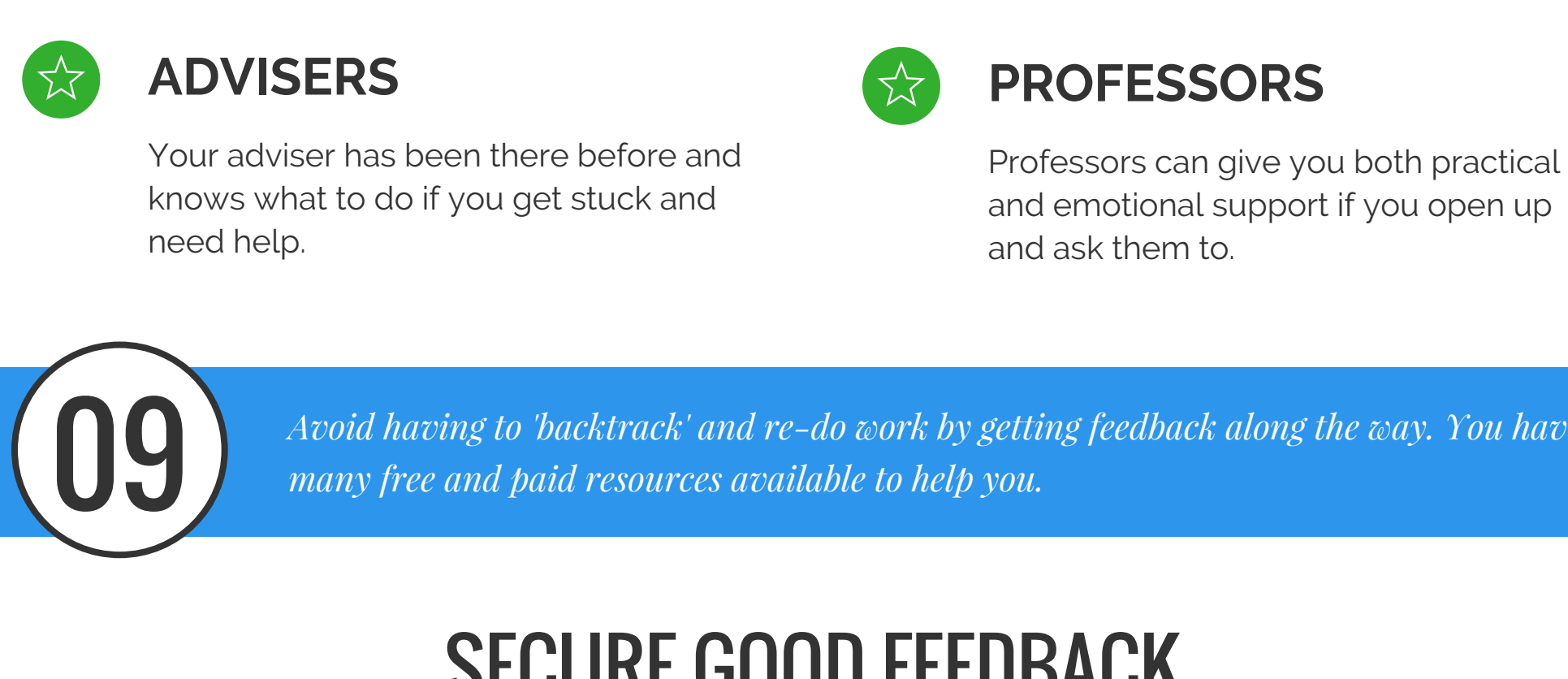
06

*Managing your time wisely is the best practice you can follow while writing your dissertation. But remember that an activity cannot be managed until it is tracked!*

## MANAGE TIME BY TRACKING PROGRESS

Who has time for time management anyway? To make sure you are on track, consider tracking your progress by creating a "checklist" for each section in your outline. You can even configure an excel spreadsheet to tally a total completion % for you. This lets you be objective about your true progress.

### Dissertation Page Completion Chart

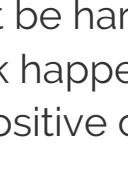


If you write a 100 page dissertation at a pace of 1 page per day you will get it done in roughly 4 months. Food for thought!

07

*Inevitably, you will face writer's block at some point. It's important to overcome this temporary obstacle by doing the right things and staying positive.*

## OVERCOMING WRITER'S BLOCK



DO THIS



DON'T DO THIS



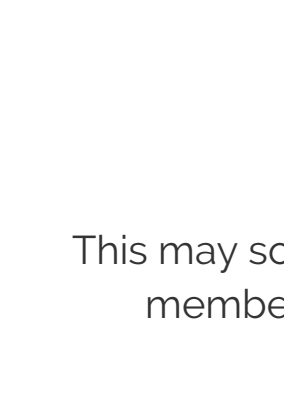
### TAKE BREAKS

Take breaks, every 50 minutes. Go on walks, get coffee, phone a friend or take a nap.



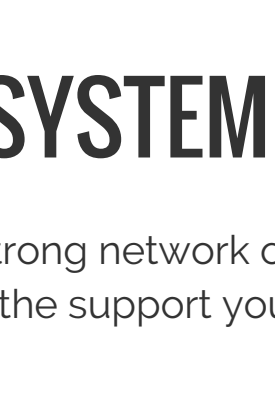
### REMOVE DISTRACTIONS

Concentrate by setting your phone on airplane mode and disable wi-fi on your computer.



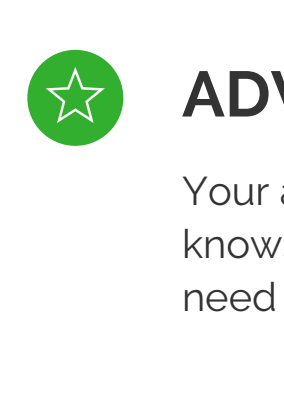
### LISTEN TO MUSIC

Lift yourself up with some classical music or other groovy tunes.



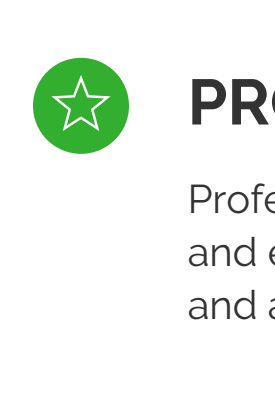
### GO OUT

Go out with friends and family to clear your head until you are ready again.



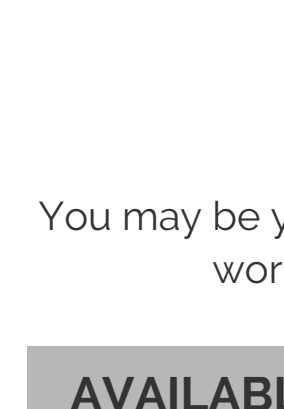
### AVOIDING WRITING

Don't force yourself to write if you are really stuck. You will grow bitter and resent the work.



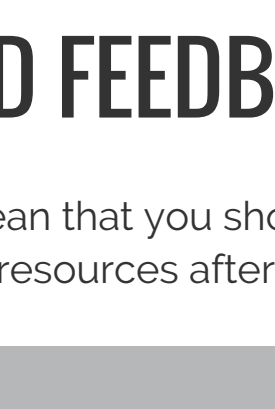
### SELF-PITY AND ANGUISH

Don't be hard on yourself, writer's block happens to everyone. Focus on positive coping methods.



### WATCH TV

TV distracts you in a way that is not productive for helping you get back on the horse.



### WAIT FOR 'INSPIRATION'

Inspiration comes from being engaged in the process and thinking critically, not waiting.

08

*As you are preparing for a long road towards your master's degree, make sure to take advantage of your other resources. Things will get tough and you won't be alone.*

## HAVE A SUPPORT SYSTEM IN PLACE

This may sound corny, but it's important to have a strong network of peers, friends, advisers, family members and others who can provide you with the support you will need to see it through.



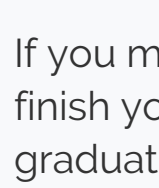
### FAMILY

Tell your loved ones ahead of time that you are working on a major milestone and you need their support.



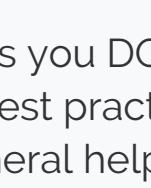
### FRIENDS

Make sure that your friends respect your time, life choices and overall commitment to getting the work done.



### ADVISERS

Your adviser has been there before and knows what to do if you get stuck and need help.



### PROFESSORS

Professors can give you both practical and emotional support if you open up and ask them to.

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*Avoid having to 'backtrack' and re-do work by getting feedback along the way. You have many free and paid resources available to help you.*

## SECURE GOOD FEEDBACK

You may be your own worst critic, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a third party review your work as you go along. Utilize some of these resources after each 'chapter' is complete.

### AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Adviser or professor

Friend or peer (tread carefully here though)

Campus writing labs or writing center

Editing services (like Ultius)

Other interested scholars

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*Keep your passion going strong by finding an inspiring mentor or notable figure, remember why you picked this topic, ditch your comfort zone and have fun!*

## KEEP THE PASSION IGNITED

If you recall from tip #1, it's important to choose a topic you are passionate about. Time and time again, you will have to ignite this flame and keep trucking forward no matter how difficult it is.



### FIND A MENTOR

Have a trusted mentor in your field to inspire you to keep going and reach higher.



### REMEMBER THE 'WHY'

Recall why you picked your major, your topic and your life path - these feelings will light the way.



### NO COMFORT ZONES

Push your limits and challenge yourself every week by going deeper into your work.



### HAVE FUN

Stay positive and have fun because you are doing what most people won't (or can't).

## FINAL THOUGHTS

If you made it to the bottom of this infographic, it means you DO have the passion and drive to start and finish your dissertation on the right foot. Follow these best practices and you will surely be on your way to graduating with flying colors. If you need editing or general help, consider connecting with an experienced writer on the Ultius platform. We're available 24/7.

### Source

<https://www.ultius.com/ultius-blog/entry/10-best-practices-for-writing-your-dissertation.html>