# bridger·jones

*Expert Correction of English Writing*

**Structuring your Thesis or Dissertation**

It is always useful to plan your thesis. Planning helps to keep you focused and enables you to allocate your time appropriately. Having a clear view of the structure of your thesis helps you concentrate on the individual elements as well as apply a coherent approach and argument across the entire work. A clear structure allows your reader to navigate your work easily, keeping them interested and engaged. What follows is a guide to help you structure your thesis.

## Title Page

- Title (including subtitle)
- Author (you)
- Institution
- Department
- Submission date
- Research/thesis mentor(s) and advisor(s)
- Their institutions and email addresses

## Abstract

A good abstract explains the importance of the paper in one sentence. It goes on to give a summary of your significant results, preferably supported by numbers with error limits where applicable. The final sentences explain the significant implications of your work. A good abstract is concise, coherent, and quantitative.

- Length should be 1-2 paragraphs, approximately 400-500 words.
- Abstracts do not have citations.
- Information present on title page should not be repeated.
- Be explicit.
- Use numbers where applicable.
- Answers to these questions should be present in the abstract:

1. What did you do?

2. Why did you do it? What question(s) were you trying to answer?

3. How did you do it? State methods.

4. What did you learn? State significant results.

5. Why is it important? Highlight at least one significant implication.

## Table of Contents

- Your reader will be happy if they can easily navigate your work.
- List all headings and subheadings with page numbers.
- Indent the subheadings.
- It should look something like this:

## List of Figures

List page numbers of all figures (images/diagrams etc.).
Include a short title for each figure but not the entire description.

## List of Tables

List page numbers of all tables.
Include a short title for each table but not the entire description.

## Introduction

Write the Introduction *after* you have completed the rest of the paper. You can't write a good introduction until you know what the rest of the paper reveals.

Include a *hook* at the beginning of the introduction. This is a statement of something interesting enough to motivate your reader to read the rest of the paper. It is a significant, important and interesting problem or issue that your paper addresses. Make the reader want to read further.

The next paragraphs in the introduction should cite previous research in the subject area. They should cite the prominent contributors to the subject area, and cite those who have done the most relevant and recent research. You should go on to explain why your work in the subject area was necessary.

Elements that belong in your introduction.

1. A statement of the goal of the study: why the study was undertaken, or why the paper was written. Try not to repeat the abstract.
2. The Literature Review. The Literature Review has the following functions:

   - Demonstrate understanding of your subject.
   - Create a new hypothesis.
   - Reveal gaps in previous research.
   - Justify your own research and place it in a wider context.
   - Evaluate the significance of past and current research.
   - All cited work should be directly relevant to the goals of the thesis.

3. A short *road map* guiding the reader to what lies ahead.
4. Explain the scope of your study. What will be included or excluded.
5. Divide the the introduction section into logical segments by using subheadings.

## Methods

Elements that belong in Methods.

- Information to demonstrate the believability of your results.
- Information necessary to replicate your study.
- Description of your data collection, materials, procedure, theory.
- Limitations, assumptions, and range of validity.
- Description of your analytical methods, including reference to any specialised software, surveys or subject-specific tools.

Methods should answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to accurately replicate the study?
- Is it possible to access any data sets used?
- Is it possible to replicate analytical methods?

Citations in Methods should be limited to data sources and references to more complete descriptions of procedures.

Do not include descriptions of results.

## Results

- The results are statements of observations including statistics, tables and graphs.
- Mention negative results as well as positive. Interpretation of results comes later.
- Try to present the case as if for an audience with little experience in your field. Present enough detail to allow others to draw their own inferences.
- Divide your results into logical and sequential segments by using subheadings.
- Key results should be stated clearly at the beginning of paragraphs. Be clear and definite.

- Separate Results from Discussion. This makes it obvious to the reader what is observation and what is interpretation.

## Discussion

Begin with a few sentences that summarise the important results. The discussion should be a brief essay that answers the following questions:

- What are the major patterns in the Results?
- What are the relationships between the various results?
- What are the exceptions to the patterns and relationships?
- What are the probable causes behind the patterns and relationships?
- Do your results agree or disagree with previous studies?
- What is the relationship between your results and your questions or hypotheses?
- Have your results revealed something new?
- Are your interpretations supported by direct evidence?

Again, divide your discussion into logical and sequential segments by using subheadings and provide constant referral to the goals of your thesis.

## Conclusions

- What is the most significant statement you can make from your results and discussion?
- Was the study successful?
- Did your research answer the questions posed?
- Were there failings in your research and what would you do differently?

## Recommendations

- What further study needs to be carried out?
- Should different methods be used in further study?
- Is your study directly related to an industry? How would the industry benefit?

## Acknowledgements

Keep your acknowledgements section short. Thank the organisations and individuals who supported you:

- Intellectually
- Technically
- Financially

**References**

Your institution will instruct on their preferred referencing system. Here are the major points to keep in mind.

- List *all* references cited in your text.
- List in alphabetical order
- Do not use footnotes as part of your citation system.

**Appendices**

Include all data including calculations and tables which were too big to easily place in the body of your text. Be sure to double check all your references to the material in appendices. Your reader needs to be able to easily access materials.

If you stick to this structure you cannot go wrong. Visit us at bridger-jones.com for more resources and to perfect your English language thesis.

Good Luck.


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