
Writing a Thesis: Some Practicalities

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Agenda

Thesis parts – names and levels

Figures, tables and appendices

Citations and references – purpose, styles and use

Direct quotes and paraphrasing

Exercise

Conclusion

Thesis parts

The main body of an MA thesis typically consists of:

1. **Chapters** (*luvut*)

- 1.1. **Sections** (*kohdat tai alaluvut*)

- 1.1.1. **Subsections** (*alakohdat*)

The actual text consists of **paragraphs** (*kappaleet*). Get the names right to avoid confusion – and to leave a professional impression :)

Thesis parts

Larger books might also be split into **parts** (*osat*) but in a thesis like this it's hardly necessary

Introduction and Conclusion tend to be short, other chapters longer

Avoid going beyond 3rd level headings (subsections)

Balance issues: super long paragraphs, single-sentence paragraphs, overblown chapters

Figures, tables and appendices

Figures i.e. images are not just decorations but part of the discussion

In academic text figures (*kuvat*) and tables (*taulukot*) are numbered and come with a **caption**

Refer to them in the text by their number like this:

- As can be seen in Figure 3, lighting was an issue.
 - The results were in line with the other test (Table 3).
-

Figures, tables and appendices

Appendices are meant for relevant extra content that would break the readability of the text: image collections, sketches, long code samples, transcriptions etc.

Appendices are at the end of the thesis

Refer to them in the main text by their number or letter:

- The original sketches can be found in Appendix A.

These days you can also upload media files (e.g. video or sound clips) when submitting the thesis

Citations and references

There are many rules, details, practices and styles, but the real purpose of citations and references is to:

- Clarify who said what – attribution
- Help to find the original sources

If there is no citation in the text, the author behind the claims must be **you**

Masood will talk about plagiarism next week

Citations and references

We don't dictate a particular referencing style, but some common ones are: *Chicago*, *MLA*, *APA* and *Harvard*

If writing in Finnish, *Nota Bene* is a usable option

Your major or supervisor/advisor may suggest a certain style

You may want to learn a particular one

A widely used style usually means more resources and completeness – different kinds of material can be cited

Some of the "big" styles are *products*, too

Citations and references

Instead of doing everything by hand, there are tools that can help with reference management and automated formatting

One viable option is Zotero: <https://www.zotero.org/>

- Free
- Multiplatform
- Integrates with writing tools

By time you build your own library of references with notes, which can be searched and used for different purposes



Zotero 6 for Linux

Your personal research assistant

Download

Other platforms

macOS · Windows · Linux 32-bit

Citations and references

Citation is the part that is in the main text

Reference is the part that can be found in the *List of References*

There should be 1:1 correspondence between the two:

- For each citation there must be a reference
- Include only cited works in the list of references

Always try to find the original sources instead of secondary referencing ("quoted by", "cited in")

Citations and references

The placement of the citation defines where it is in effect. The most typical cases:

- For this sentence only (Reunanen 2022).
- According to Reunanen (2022), this sentence only.
- Until the previous citation or the beginning of the paragraph. Need to be extra careful. (Reunanen 2022.)

The style you're using (or your advisor) might dictate otherwise – there are different practices

Citations and references

Some other nice to know bits that you might need

For books – usually not articles – page numbers in the citation to help the reader: (Newman 2014, 23–48)

Multiple citations in one: (Newman 2014; Kerssens 2022)

Many authors: (Montfort et al. 2013)

Check the style manual for exact details

Quoting and paraphrasing

When discussing someone else's text, there are basically two ways to go about it

A **direct quote** is a verbatim copy of the original text

Short quotes go between "citation marks", several lines as a separate **block quote**

The other way is to **paraphrase** the original text i.e. tell it with your own words

Exercise

Download the file provided on MyCourses – Joint Materials

Using your favorite editor, highlight the area where each citation is in effect using different colors

When you're done let's see the solution

Conclusion

Takeaways:

- Chapters–sections–subsections–paragraphs
- Figure and table captions, refer by the number
- Citations and references – which is which?
- 1:1 correspondence
- Attribution is the key

And now: time for questions and discussion
