# The Writing Process & Writing Strategies

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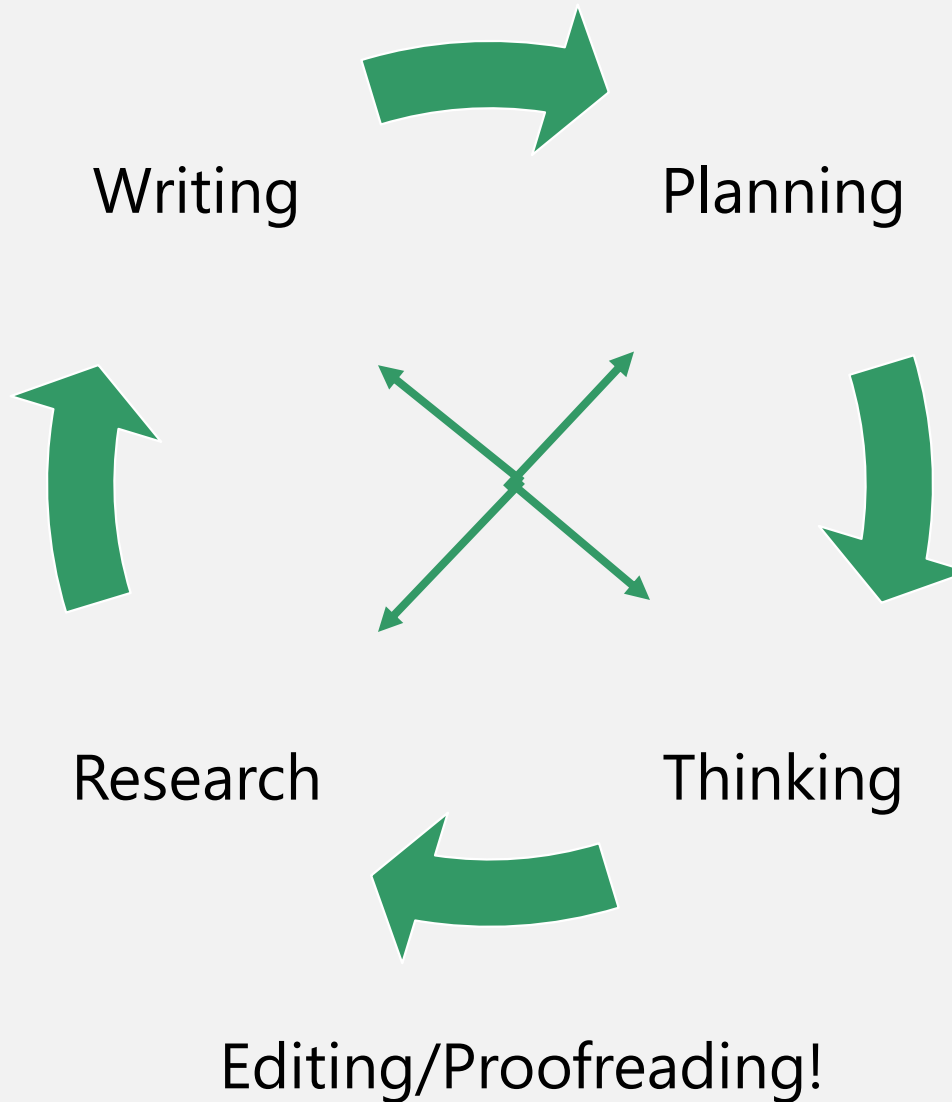# What type of degree?

1. PhD
2. PGR
3. PGT

# Learning Objectives

- Focus on writing process
- Explore strategies for starting and maintaining writing
- Identify self-management strategies to aid process
- Consider structure and outlining
- Build your argument
- Share strategies and experiences

What do you want to get out of this session?

# Writing Process - Steps

# Steps – early to later

## Planning

- prewriting,
- outlining,
- argument mapping,
- flow & coherence

## Thinking

## Researching

## Writing

- Drafting
- Revising

# Murray's Model (2002/6)

Social

- Interactions, discussion
- Support

Psychological

- Motivation, goal setting, self-monitoring

Rhetorical = Writing

- Regular writing
- "Snack" writing + "binge" writing

# How to write a lot (Silvia 2007)

Barriers:

"I can't find time to write"

"I need to do some more analyses first" aka "I need to read a few more articles"

"To write a lot I need a new computer…"

"I'm waiting until I feel like it"

# Self-management & Planning

- Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
- SMART goals

# SMART Goal Setting

- S = Specific

- M = Measurable

- A = Action-related

- R = Realistic

- T = Time-based

# Self-management & Planning

- Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
- SMART goals

- Planning tools
  - Timeline
  - Weekly

- https://www.ithinkwell.com.au/resources/PhDToolkit

# Possible Timeline

Submit - 27 January 2026

Proposed draft deadlines:

|  | Draft 1 | Draft 2 | Final Revision |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ch. 1 - Introduction |  |  |  |
| Ch. 2 - Literature Review |  |  |  |
| Ch. 3 - Methods |  |  |  |
| Ch. 4 - Findings Interviews |  |  |  |
| Ch. 5 - Findings Document/Inventory |  |  |  |
| Ch. 6 - Discussion |  |  |  |
| Ch. 7 - Conclusion |  |  |  |
| Abstract |  |  |  |

# Overview – Gantt chart

| Months | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Topic Agreed | ■ | | | | | | |
| Aims & Objectives | ■ | | | | | | |
| Opening Sections | | ■ | | | | ■ | |
| Draft Outline | | | | ■ | | | |
| Literature Review | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | |
| Method/ Approach | | ▦ | ▦ | ▦ | ▦ | | |
| Analysis/ Results | | | | ▦ | ▦ | | |
| Discussion/ Conclusions | | | | | ■ | ■ | |
| References Acknowledge | | | | | | ■ | ■ |
| Binding | | | | | | | ▨ |
| Submission to Tutor | | | | | | | ▨ |

# Self-management & Planning

- Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
- SMART goals
- Planning tools
  - Timeline
  - Weekly
- Deadlines
- Writing routine

# Writing Strategies



- Notebook/journal
- Write to prompts
- Freewriting
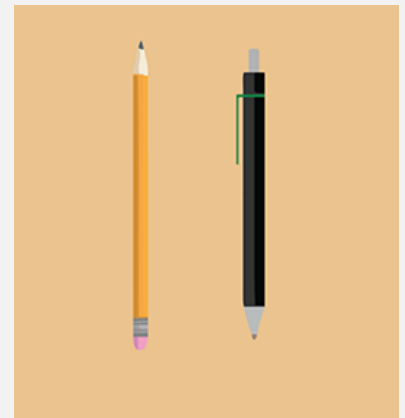- Generative writing
- Writing Sandwich

# Writing to prompts

- What writing have I done and what would I like to do?

- Where do my ideas come from?

- How does what I read compare with my own views?

- What I want to write about next is…

- What do I want to write about next?

# Freewriting

- Writing for 5 minutes
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Private – no external reader
- No structure needed
- Topic related to your research
- Like brainstorming in sentences

# Discuss what you wrote about

- Don't read what you wrote!

- Just talk about what you wrote during the exercise

- Or discuss the freewriting exercise – did you like it? Not like it? Was it useful?

# What did you think of that exercise?

# How many words?

# Generative writing

- Writing for 5 minutes
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Focusing on one topic (maybe from your freewriting
- To be read by someone else

# Writing Sandwich



- Writing – 10 minutes

- Talking – 10 minutes

- Writing – 10 minutes



# Verbalising

# Interactive reading & note taking

- Collect notes not articles or books
- "...your thoughts about others' work" (Single 2010, p. 79)
- Pre-Writing

## How do you make notes?

# What to make notes on

- Headings
  - Big Picture
  - Big Point
  - Premise or Hypothesis
  - Data, sources, arguments
  - Theories or conceptual
  - Analytical or research methods
  - Results or analysis
  - Quotations
  - How it influences your research (Single, 2010)
- Templates - https://study.sagepub.com/wallaceandwray3e

# Citing sources

"a *citation* occurs when you use a specific source in your work and then follow up with the proper bibliographic information; plagiarism issues arise when you use a specific source, but **fail to indicate what you have borrowed**, and/or **fail to provide proper bibliographic information"**

From
https://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/logistics3.cfm
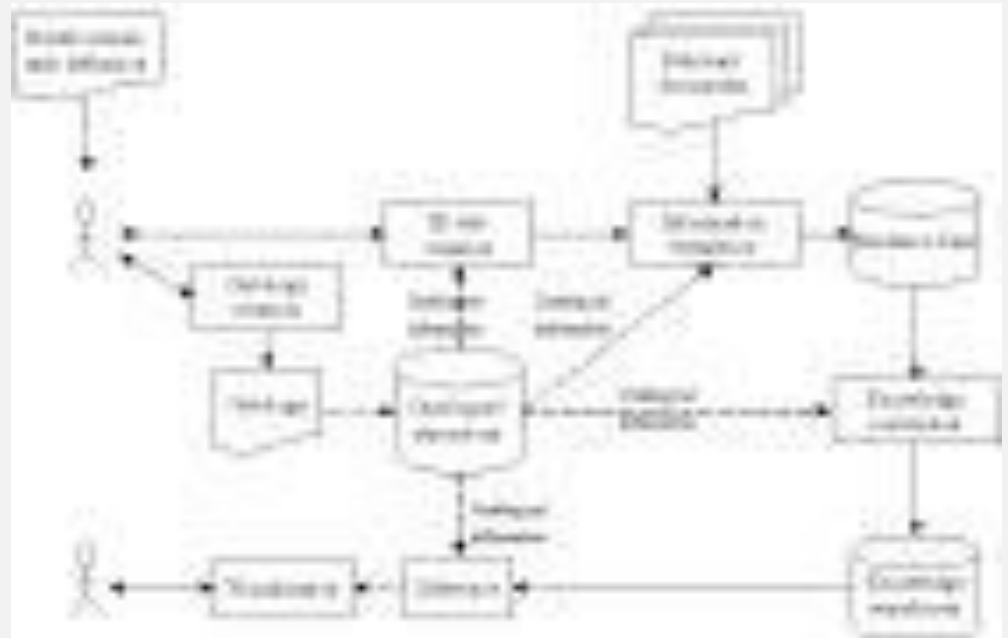
# Paraphrasing

- Summarising the work or ideas of someone else = cite source

- Versus your assessment or development of their work = no citation (Pyper, 2003)

- How to paraphrase:
  - Make sure you understand – reread
  - Write summaries/paraphrases without text in front of you
  - Check with original passage
  - Before writing, explain the theories, material, or data to someone else (or to yourself)
  - Note card with key word
  
  (OWL at Purdue - [Paraphrasing // Purdue Writing Lab](#))

# Structure & Outlining

- Mapping
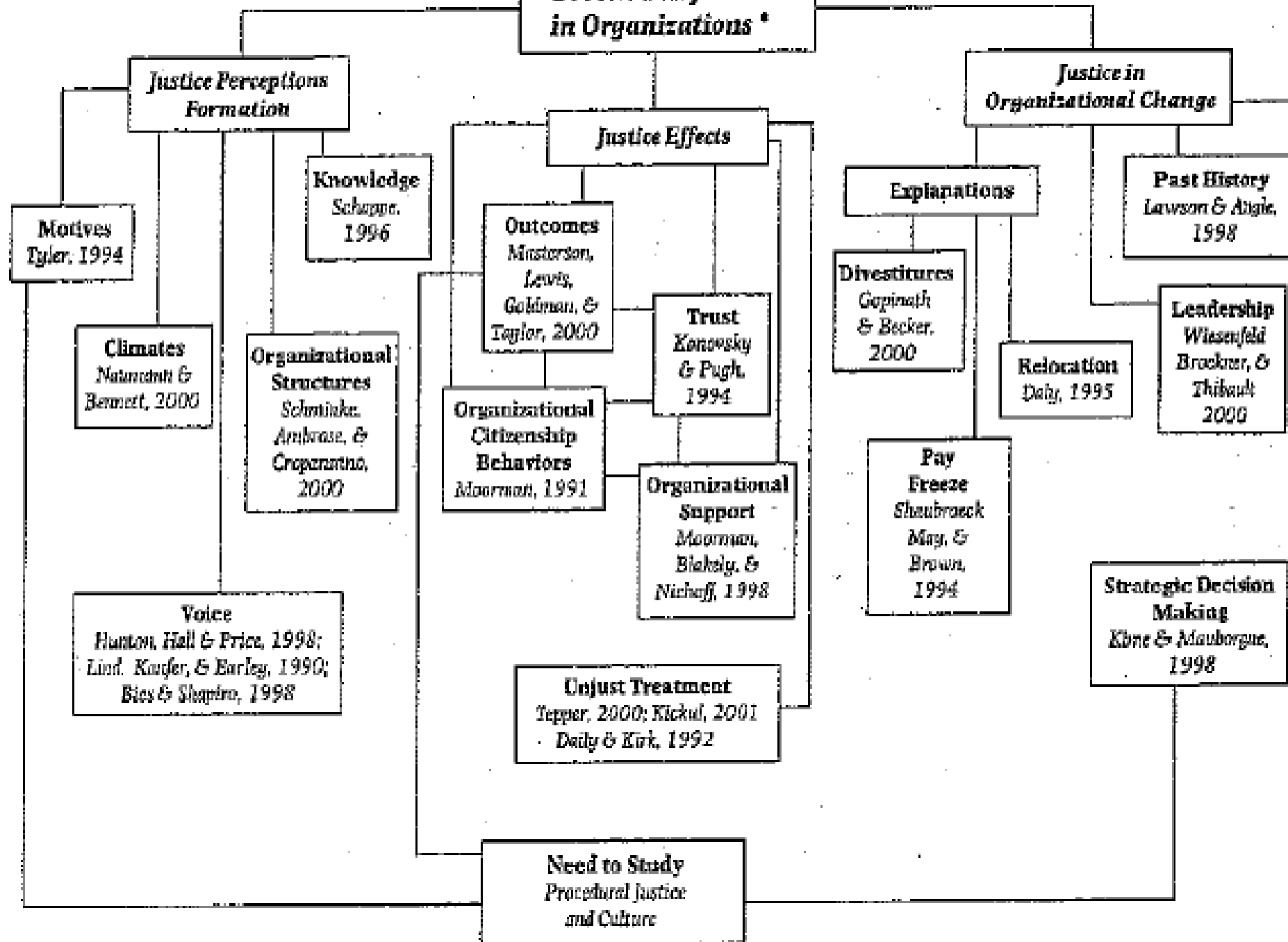- Visualisation

**Procedural Justice in Organizations** *

**Justice Perceptions Formation**

**Justice Effects**

**Justice in Organizational Change**

**Knowledge**
*Schappe,*
*1996*

**Explanations**

**Past History**
*Lawson & Aigle,*
*1998*

**Motives**
*Tyler, 1994*

**Outcomes**
*Masterson,*
*Lewis,*
*Goldman, &*
*Taylor, 2000*

**Trust**
*Konovsky*
*& Pugh,*
*1994*

**Divestitures**
*Gopinath*
*& Becker,*
*2000*

**Leadership**
*Wiesenfeld*
*Brockner, &*
*Thibault*
*2000*

**Climates**
*Naturmti &*
*Bennett, 2000*

**Organizational Structures**
*Schminke,*
*Ambrose, &*
*Cropanzano,*
*2000*

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**
*Moorman, 1991*

**Organizational Support**
*Moorman,*
*Blakely, &*
*Niehoff, 1998*

**Relocation**
*Daly, 1995*

**Pay Freeze**
*Schaubroeck*
*May, &*
*Brown,*
*1994*

**Voice**
*Hunton, Hall & Price, 1998;*
*Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990;*
*Bies & Shapiro, 1998*

**Unjust Treatment**
*Tepper, 2000; Kickul, 2001*
*Daily & Kirk, 1992*

**Strategic Decision Making**
*Kine & Mauborgne,*
*1998*

**Need to Study**
*Procedural Justice*
*and Culture*

TABLE 6.7  USING TABLES TO ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION

| Theme 1: Managerial learning and work | | Theme 4: Work-based action learning | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Author/study date | Focus and sub-theme | Author/study date | Focus and sub-theme |
| Shenhar and Renier (1996) | Modular approach to defining managerial work and roles so managers can self-assess complexities of own jobs and identify development needs. | Harrison (1996) | Critical examination of the concept of action learning (AL). Argues AL offers potential to develop strategic awareness in turbulent times. |
| Margerison and McCann (1996b) | Advocates self-profiling in eight areas of work so managers can work more effectively with others. | Chan (1994) | Relates action learner's experience of action research (AR) to discuss how AL and AR can deliver a balance of knowledge and action relevant to management. |
| Oshagbemi (1995) | Discusses the nature of the reality of management work and how managers spend their time. | Reeves (1996) | Compares two companies' use of action learning, one for individual staff, the other where a problem-solving ethos pervades corporate life. |
| Margerison and McCann (1996a) | Profiles key communication skills and relates them to different approaches to problem solving and describes a self-assessment | Howell (1994) | Case study of the International Management Centres. Shows that graduate managers can operationalize AL and AR to bring about |

# Thesis Argument Map

| Introduction | Chapter 1: title | Chapter 2:title | Chapter 3: title | Chapter 4: title | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Opening hook/example<br>• Context<br>• Academic debate<br>• Gap in the academic literature<br>• Research question<br>• Methodology / approach<br>• Argument (overall answer to the research question)<br>• Signposting / outline of the thesis (can include more specific answers to the research question) | Broad purpose:<br><br>Argument: | Broad purpose:<br><br>Argument: | Broad purpose:<br><br>Argument: | Broad purpose:<br><br>Argument: | • Remind readers what you set out to do/what research question you sought to answer<br>• Summary of argument/ what you found in relation to the central research question<br>• Implications of your findings<br>• What next for this research/issue? |
| | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | |
| | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | |
| | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | Section<br>I will **argue**: | |

# Structure & Outlining



- Mapping
- **One page outline**
  - Generic thesis structure
  - Use table of contents feature
- Allocate word count for each section
- Design sub-sections
- Write in layers
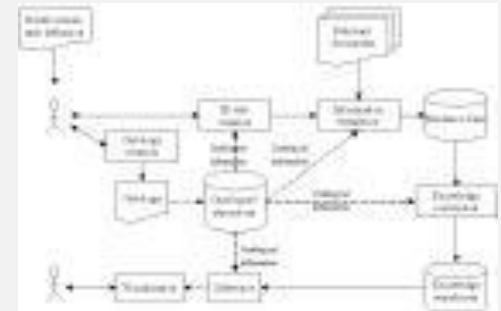
# One page Outline

"An effective piece of writing has a sturdy skeleton. The skeleton connects each part of the writing so that all the parts work, developing and supporting the principal meaning of the draft."

(Murray, 1991 cited in Single, 2010 p. 95)

# Outlining – Level 1

**Background**                **Context/Background**

**Objectives**                **Theme/Issue/Topic 1**

**Method**                    **Theme/Issue/Topic 2**

**Findings**                  **Theme/Issue/Topic 3**

**Conclusions**               **Conclusion**

# Outlining – Level 2

I . Chapter 1 – Introduction.
    1. A statement of the problem.
    2. Definition of terms.
    3. Review of literature.
    4. Description of the remaining chapters.

II . Chapter 2 – Methods Used.
    1. Requirements and specifications.
    2. Algorithms and data structures.

III . Chapter 3 through $N-1$ – The middle chapters depend on your particular project.

IV . Chapter $N$ – Conclusions.
    1. Statement of your results.
    2. Statement of problems left unsolved.

V . Appendix A – User's Manual.

VI . Appendix B – Maintenance Manual.

VII . Appendix C – Design Documents.

VIII . Appendix D – Source Code.

IX . Appendix E – Test Suite.

Level 3

**Headings**                    **Sub-headings**    **Sub-sub headings**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| 500 words | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |

| | |
|---|---|
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| Context/Background 1500 Words | 500 words | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |

| | |
|---|---|
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| 500 words | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
| | 100 words |
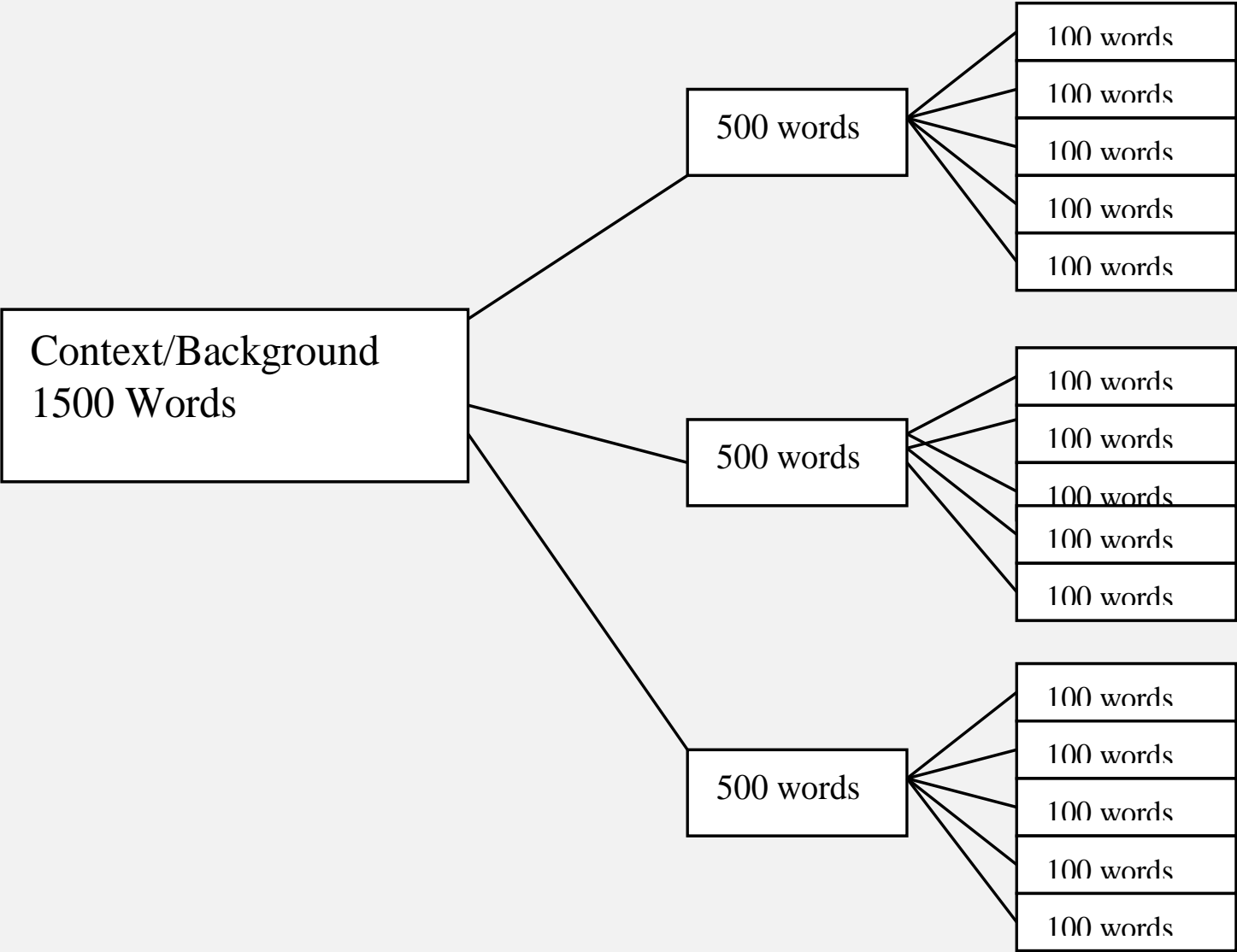
# Writing in layers

- Write a list of chapter headings
- Write a sentence or two on contents of each chapter
- Write lists of headings for each section in each chapter
- Make notes for each heading on how you will develop the section
- Write an introductory paragraph for each chapter
- Write the word count, draft number and date at top of first page

# Structure & Outlining



- Mapping
- One page outline
  - Generic thesis structure
  - Use table of contents feature
- Allocate word count for each section
- Design sub-sections
- Write in layers
- **Focus statement**
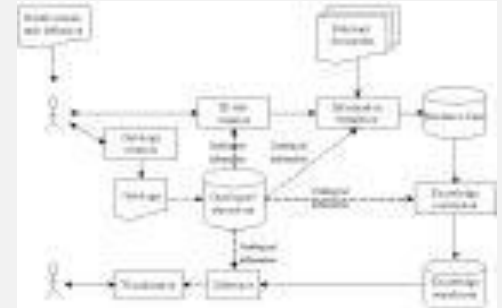
# Focus Statements

- A 1-4 sentence statement of your research in the first person, active voice

- Must be concise, clear, compelling

- Can help you decide a topic, not permanent!

- It will be re-worked and it will evolve

- It's a tool!!

# Example Focus Statement

I'm interested in how teachers in HE can develop their students' learning skills within the context of the subject. I will use a mixed methods approach based on a constructivist approach.  I want to interview both first-year students and their teachers to get their view on what they did, how it was perceived, it they thought it was effective. I'll also measure learning and study strategies before and after the teachers' learning skills interventions. I hope the research will lead to recommendations on how teachers can help their students improve their learning and performance.
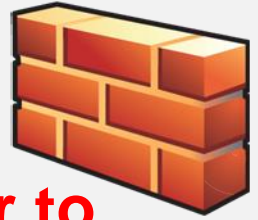
# Structure - Paragraphs

- One Point

- Supporting sentences
  - Explain, elaborate
  - Evidence or examples

- Concluding sentence

# Paragraph structure

**Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. (TOPIC SENTENCE).**
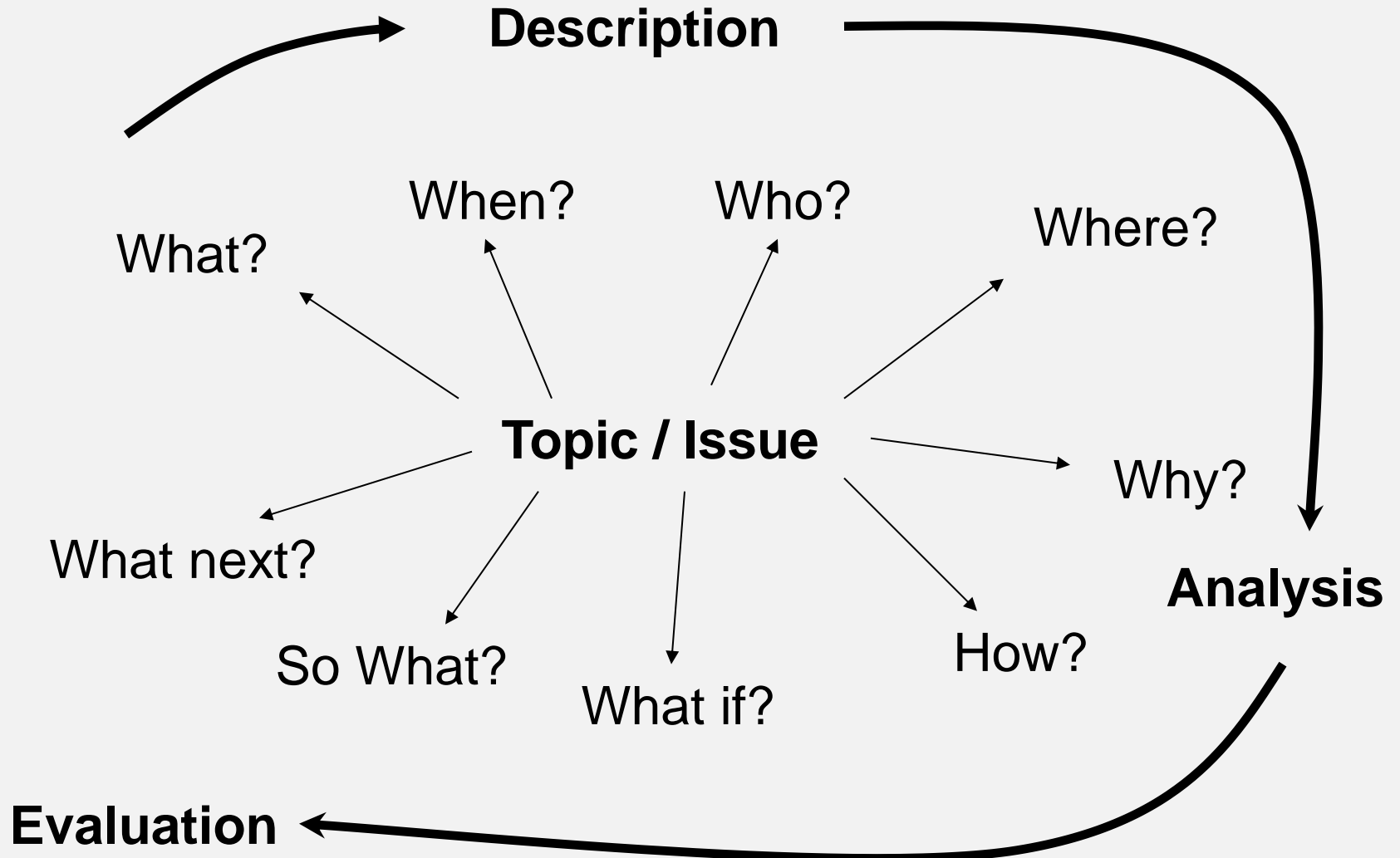
In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. (SUPPORTING SENTENCE)

Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. (SUPPORTING SENTENCE)

**Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. (CONCLUDING SENTENCE)**

Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests. (Transitional sentence)

# Model to generate critical thinking



**Description**

When?    Who?

What?                                    Where?

**Topic / Issue**

                                         Why?

What next?

                                         **Analysis**

So What?

What if?              How?

**Evaluation**

Critical Thinking and Reflection Archives - ALDinHE

# Example

Sample: Smith (1970) reported that bilbies come out at night and eat chocolates.  Jones (1972) described the variety of beetles eaten by bilbies on their daytime trips.  Wheeler (1974) reported that bilbies eat only apples.

The writer asks questions of the text:
- What is the conclusion about bilbies that can be drawn from these facts?
- What is the common denominator?
- So what?

To rewrite, find the important point in the information and place it in a theme sentence in the beginning of the paragraph.
What thoughts / new research / speculations do the data suggest?

To rewrite, think of the implications of the literature and develop these ideas at the end of the paragraph.

**Description**

**What?**

What is this about?
What is the context / situation?
What is the main point / problem / topic to be explored?

**Where?**

Where does it take place?

Introductory and background information to contextualise problem / topic

Who is involved?
Who is affected?

**Who?**

Who might be interested?

**When?**

When does this occur?

**Analysis**

Why this argument / theory / suggestion / solution?
Why not something else?

**Why?**

Why did this occur?
Why was that done?

How does one factor affect another?

**How?**

How do the parts fit into the whole?
How does it work In theory? In practice? / context?

Exploring the relationship of parts to whole

What if this were wrong?

**What if?**

What are the alternatives?
What if there were a problem?
What if this or that factor were - added?
altered? - removed?

Possible situations responses and alternative

**So what?**

So what am I saying about this? Why?
Is it successful / convincing?
So what does this mean?

**Evaluation**

So what is the point / underlying issue / implication of this? In what way is this significant?

**What next?**

What can be learnt from it?
What needs doing / considering now?
Is it transferable?
Where else could it be applied (and how)?

Implications
Solutions
Conclusions
Recommendations

*Copyright Learning Development, University of Plymouth, 2006*

# More analytical

Rewritten:

The elusive bilby has provoked considerable disagreement over such essential facts as whether it is diurnal or nocturnal, and what constitutes its staple diet.  Smith (1970) considered them to be nocturnal whereas Jones (1972) reported that they are daytime foragers.  Smith (1970) also reported bilbies had a fondness for chocolate but his findings were rejected by both Jones (1972) and Wheeler (1974).  Jones believed bilbies eat beetles, and Wheeler thought that apples were the staple food.  However, neither chocolate nor apples are indigenous to the bilby habitat and it seems improbable that they are the main foodstuffs for bilbies.

Eucalyptus leaves, on the other hand, are widely available in the bilby region …..

(From Dunn, 2007, p. 8)

# Signposting for overall flow & coherence

- Indicator words for claims
  - Therefore, thus, hence, so, as a result
- Indicator words for reasons
  - Because, since, on account of, for, in view of, for the reason that
- Similarity, contrasts, alternatives
- Listing
- Reporting verbs

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

Linking words & phrases - https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1328393/Linking-words.pdf
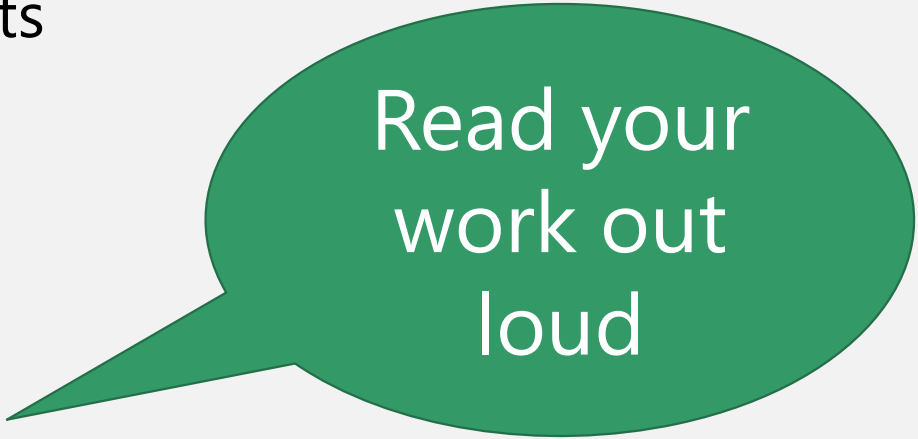
Bodo Slotta, T.A. (2000) Phylogenetic analysis of Iliamna (Malvaceae) using the internal transcribed spacer region. Unpublished master's thesis. Retrieved from http://www.uwc.ucf.edu on 8 Jun 2007.

In large gene families with tandem repeats, as is the case for nrDNA, unequal crossing-over may be more important than gene conversion in the concerted evolution process (Li, 1997). For example, the number of repeats can fluctuate without having any adverse effects. With a larger number of repeats being exchanged, the rate of concerted evolution increases as well. Correspondingly, homogeneity increases as the number of repeats increases. Rate then increases as homogeneity among the copies increases, leading to a self-feeding repetition. As a result of this process, it is believed that nrDNA is found in up to thousands of copies in the nuclear genome (Baldwin et al., 1995).

# Editing

- At organisational level
  - Based on table of contents
  - Chapters and sections
- At content level
  - Preview, smooth, review
  - Section by section
- Targeted revision
  - Grammatical errors
  - Idiosyncrasies

Read your work out loud

# Overcoming blocks?

- Freewriting & Generative writing
- Mind-mapping
- Verbalise
- Avoid perfectionism
- Writing buddy
- Seek support
- Visualise completed thesis
- Combine strategies

# Tips for successful writing

- Plan to write regularly
- Make a time plan and stick to it
- Write up section as soon as it's ready
- Stop writing at a point where you could go on – makes it easier to start next time!
- Decide where and when best for you
- Don't write when exhausted
- Seek support

# Where to find us



Visit our website at:
**http://www.tcd.ie/sld**

Email us at:
**student.learning@tcd.ie**

Enrol on Blackboard module:
**Academic Skills for Successful Learning**

# Feedback, please!

https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/SLDPGSchool

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