WRITING A DISSERTATION
AM I READY FOR THIS?

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I. Questioning the prerequisite writing skills

**Sentence Structure Aptitude**

- Is writing a joy to you?
- When you were in undergraduate classes, did your professors compliment your writing?
- Does basic sentence structure come easily to you?
- Are you interested in “looking up” information in order to improve your writing?
- Is writing a painful process?
- When you were in undergraduate classes, did your professors need to give you extensive editing?
- Are you constantly puzzled over what “makes good writing?”
- Are you too rushed to do final drafts to improve your work?
Expository style awareness

- Written in the third person
- Dissertation writing – *Just the facts, madam!*
- No cheerleading style
- Citations, Citations, Citations
- Plagiarism
- Write for Power (Sparks, 1982)
Categorizing abilities

Categorizing aptitude

- Can you transfer ideas from a brainstorming activity and categorize them?
- Are you able to read research articles and compare and contrast the authors’ research results?
- Are you able to visualize how each of the studies read about could have been done with a different research method?
- After a brainstorming activity, are you totally befuddled as to how to organize these thoughts into headings, subheadings, and paragraphs?
- After reading research articles, do you have no idea as to how to analyze them?
- Do you have no desire to think of another way a researcher may have done his/her data collection?
Color coding applications

- Visual plan of coding themes and subthemes
- Color code – highlighters or font
- Abbreviate themes
Transition devises

- Before writing a new section, add a connecting sentence that repeats a main concept from the previous section and introduces the main concept in the new section.
Transition Example

- A summary of mentoring literature follows to provide a specific context for educational reform and this study.
Transition devices, continued

- First, second, third.....although these transition words seem common place, they help the reader comprehend the sequence of your thoughts
- Furthermore, additionally, however....these transition words help connect your ideas
- Overuse of transition words can be intrusive!
Coherence and cohesion strategies

- Logical connections from paragraph to paragraph, section to section
- Logical connections from sentence to sentence
Summarization skills

- Each introduction is a type of summary, previewing the main concepts
- Each chapter requires a summary, reviewing the main concepts
- A good writer is able to retell ideas without "copy and pasting"
- However, "copy and pasting" is appropriate for key dissertation elements
II. Polishing your writing

Apply ten practical steps

1. Ask who cares
2. Edit for weaknesses
3. Use computer tools
4. Proofread your work later
5. Delete unnecessary words
Ten Practical Tips, Cont.

- 6. Highlight all verbs
- 7. Highlight adjectives and adverbs
- 8. Eliminate clichés
- 9. Sprinkle in variety
- 10. Read aloud (Hostetler, 2004)
Utilize APA

- This is your writing bible
- Use it as a reference, not read as a novel
- Your university may also supply you with templates
Connect with computer gurus

- Page numbering
- Headings
- Formatting in general
Hire an editor

- APA editors
- Editors with varied services
- Statisticians
- Caution: You are the scholar
III. Fulfilling the components of a dissertation

- Research method:
  - Quantitative
  - Qualitative
  - Mixed methods
  - It has to make sense to the researcher!
Research design

- What are your research questions?
- Will your data answer those questions?
- K.I.S.S. principle (Keep it simple, sweetheart)
- Remember, you can always dig deeper after you have your degree
Chapter One – Introduction to the study

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Background
- 3. Problem statement
- 4. Purpose statement
- 5. Significance of the study to the academic field
Chapter One, Cont.

- 6. Nature of the study
- 7. Research questions/Hypotheses
- 8. Conceptual/Theoretical framework
- 9. Definitions
- 10. Assumptions
- 11. Limitations/Delimitations
- 12. Summary
Chapter Two – Literature review

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Documentation (Title Search)
- 3. Literature review
- 4. Summary
- 5. Conclusion
Chapter Three - Methods

1. Introduction
2. Research Design
3. Appropriateness of Design
4. Research Questions and Hypotheses
5. Population/participants
6. Informed Consent
7. Sampling Frame
Chapter Three, Continued

- 8. Confidentiality
- 9. Geographic Location
- 10. Instrumentation
- 11. Data Collection
- 12. Date Analysis (quantitative or qualitative)
- 13. Validity and Reliability
- 14. Summary
Chapter 4 - Results

- Results reported with no editorial
- Honest report of influential external factors
- 1. Introduction
- 2. Findings
- 3. Summary
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

- Insights
- Potential
- 1. Introduction
- 2. Conclusions
IV. Scrutinizing your attitudes about writing

**Attitude about Writing**

- I love to write!
- Read and write in small chunks and in big chunks
- The only real writing pitfall: not diving into the process at all!
- Have a bulldog attitude: I am going to do this, so I will bite onto this thing and not let go until it is done!
- I am a life-long learner!

- Let’s be realistic, at midnight most of us are running on fumes!
- It is hard to find any chunks when you are balancing work, family, and responsibilities....but it is possible....you need to get creative!
Contact Information

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