

How to Organize your Thesis

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Outline

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Getting Started

Hints & Tips

Q: What Graduate Research is All About?

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 2. solve the problem or answer the question

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 - Q4: Has the student made an adequate contribution to knowledge?

A Generic Thesis Skeleton

1. Introduction
2. Background Information (optional)
3. Review of the State of the Art
4. Research Question or Problem Statement
5. Describing How you Solved the Problem or Answered the Question
6. Conclusions
7. References
8. Appendices

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2. Background Information(optional)

- ▶ A brief section giving background information may be necessary, especially if your work spans two or more traditional fields (notation conventions)

3. Review of the State of the Art

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 - ▶ Organize this section by idea, not by author or by publication

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NOTE: The order of the sections is not fixed for example
you need to write this chapter before the related work

5. Describing How You Solved the Problem or Answered the Question

- ▶ This part of the thesis is much more free-form
 - ▶ one or several sections and subsections
 - ▶ don't forget to make balance between the chapters
- ▶ Only one purpose
 - ▶ to convince the examiners that you answered the question or solved the problem that you set for yourself

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3. Future Research (open research questions)

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Truth be known: most examiners also look for their own publications if they are in the topic area of the thesis, so list these too

8. Appendices

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- ▶ Any material which impedes the smooth development of your presentation, but which is important to justify the results of a thesis

Examples: program listings, immense tables of data, lengthy mathematical proofs or derivations,...

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T.H.E.S.I.S

True Happiness Ended Since It Started

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NOTE: Make such decisions early, during the outline phase

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- ▶ Take-home message: a rush job has painful consequences at the defense 

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- ▶ Remember that a thesis is not a story
- ▶ Avoid using phrases like "Clearly, this is the case..." or "Obviously, it follows that..."

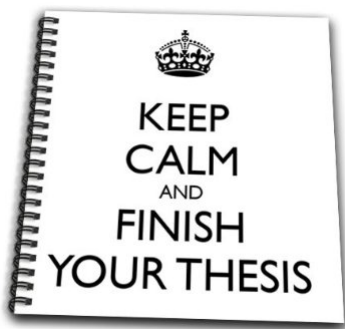
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- ▶ Avoid using phrases like "Clearly, this is the case..." or "Obviously, it follows that..."
- ▶ Avoid red flags, claims (like "software is the most important part of a computer system")
- ▶ In Germany, your PhD thesis is true publication
(for public)

A Note on Computer Programs and Other Prototypes

- ▶ the thesis is *NOT about the tool*, it is about
the contribution to the knowledge

Conclusion



GOOD LUCK!

References

- ▶ John W. Chinneck's "How to Organize your Thesis"