

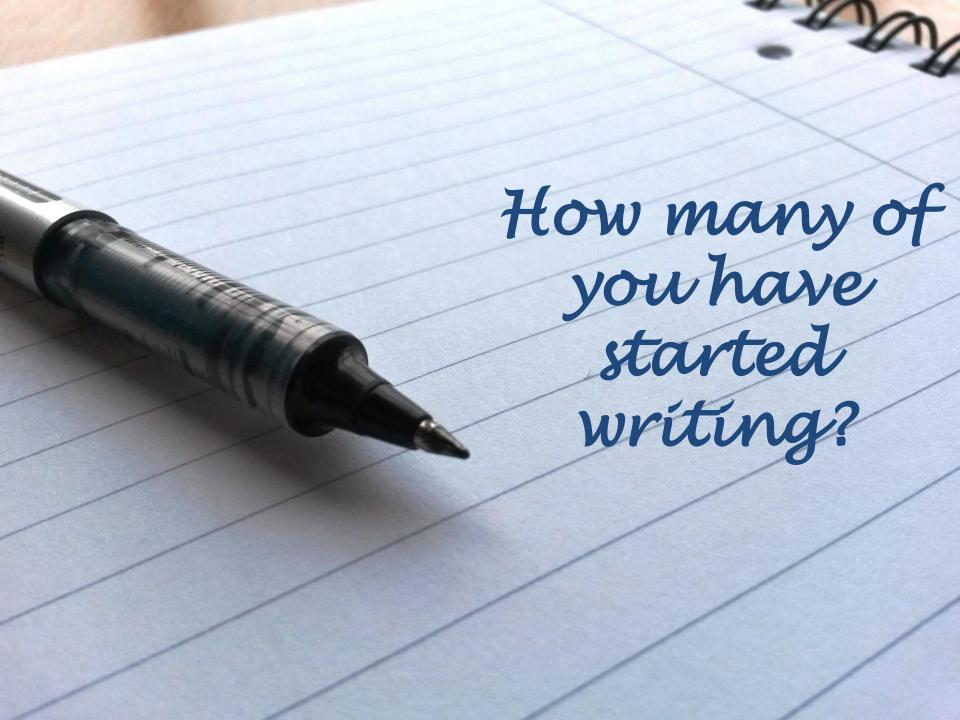
# **Preparing to Write Your Thesis**

#### **Dr Sam Byers**

Researcher Developer (Life Sciences)

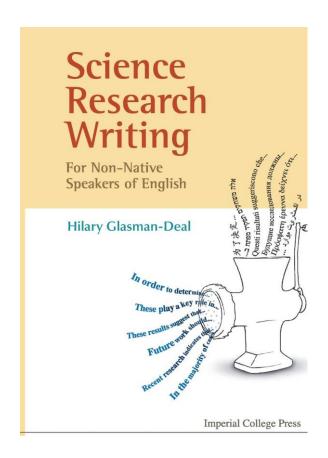






#### What we will not cover today...

Grammar and academic writing





https://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/adtis/adtis-online-courseware.html

#### What we will not cover today...

- Submission of thesis
  - Paperwork associated with submission of thesis
  - Abstract submission
  - Deadlines for submitting thesis
  - Extensions
  - More information on this, speak with Fiona Roby (fr288@cam.ac.uk)

#### What we will cover today...

- Department of Veterinary Medicine thesis guidelines
- Reminder of the writing process
- Thesis planning techniques
- Establishing productivity
- Techniques to over come writers block
- Habits of a productive writer
- Tips and tools to help avoid procrastination
- Important things to think about (avoiding costly mistakes)
- Preparing a check list
- Good luck!

#### Open UP Study Skills

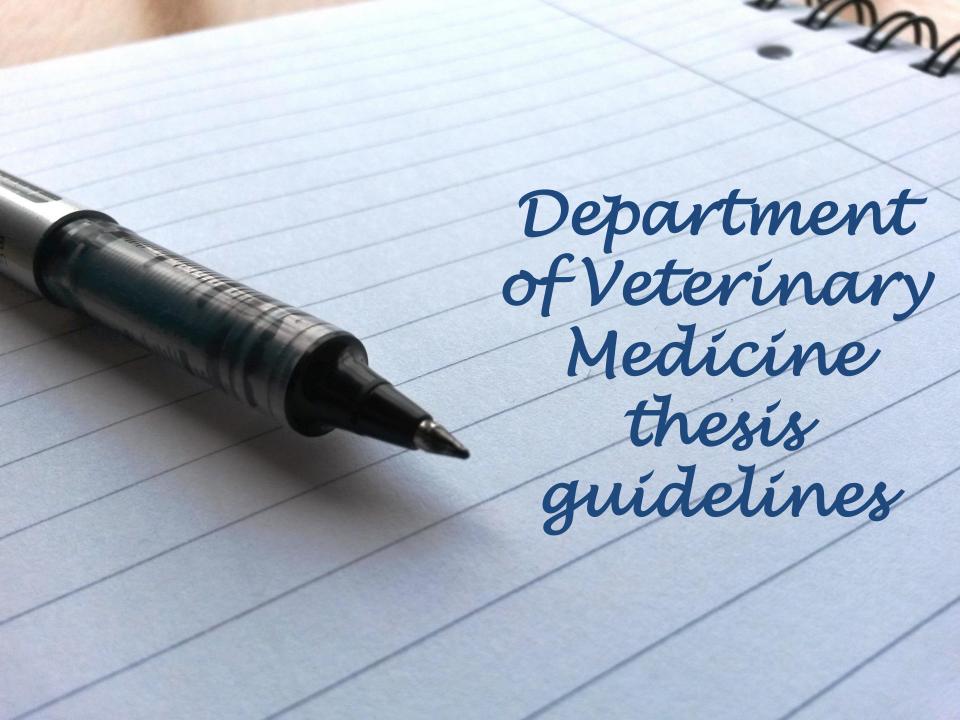
# How to Write a Thesis

3rd edition

- Develop good writing habits
- . Overcome writer's block
- Understand the assessment process
- Get the most from your supervisor



Rowena Murray



#### **Format of Thesis**

#### The thesis must be:

- Written in English, apart from quotations and recognised technical formulae
- Be thoroughly checked to ensure clear, formal English has been used throughout and there are minimal typing errors and/or spelling mistakes
- Be typescript on A4 paper
- Be portrait format
- Use single sided or double-sided printing
- Use one-and-a-half spaced type
- Be maximum of 60,000 words (or 80,00 by special permission of the Degree Committee)
  - Excludes figures, photographs, tables, appendices and bibliography

#### **Format of Thesis**

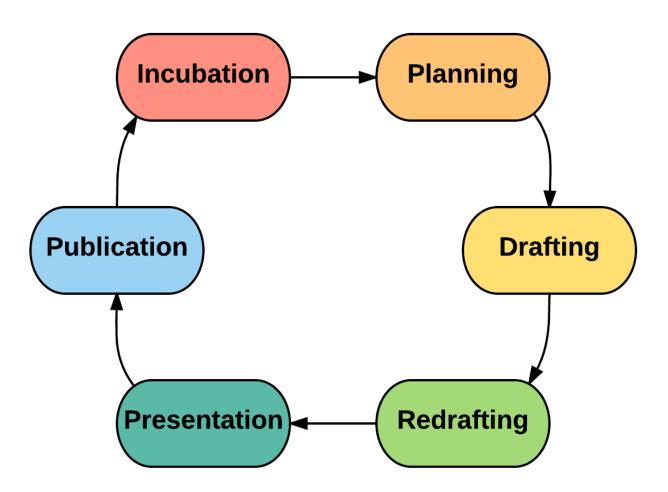
#### In addition

- Any photographs or other illustrations should be scanned or printed into the text.
- Originals, not photocopies may be used, in which case these must be secured permanently inside the thesis (not by use of adhesive tape)

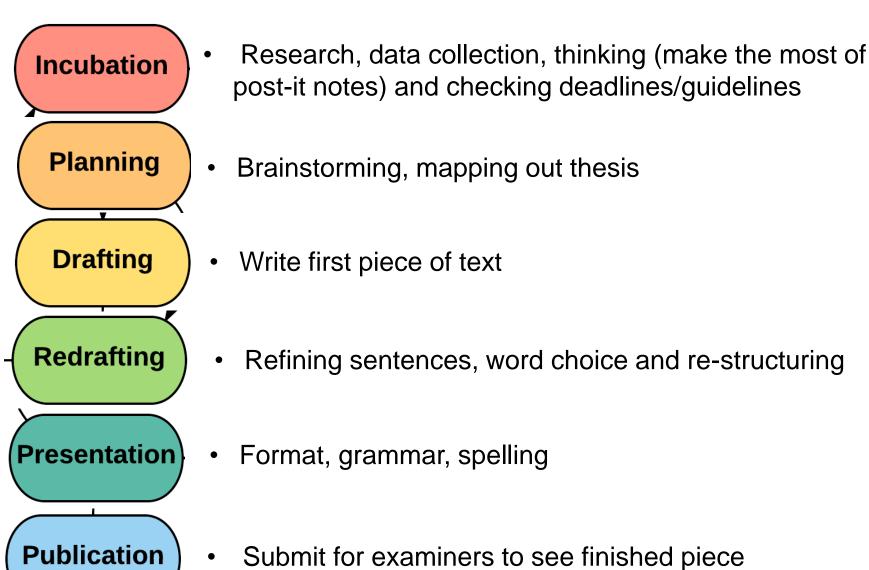
Any further questions relating to format of thesis please email Fiona Roby (fr288@cam.ac.uk)



#### **The Writing Process**

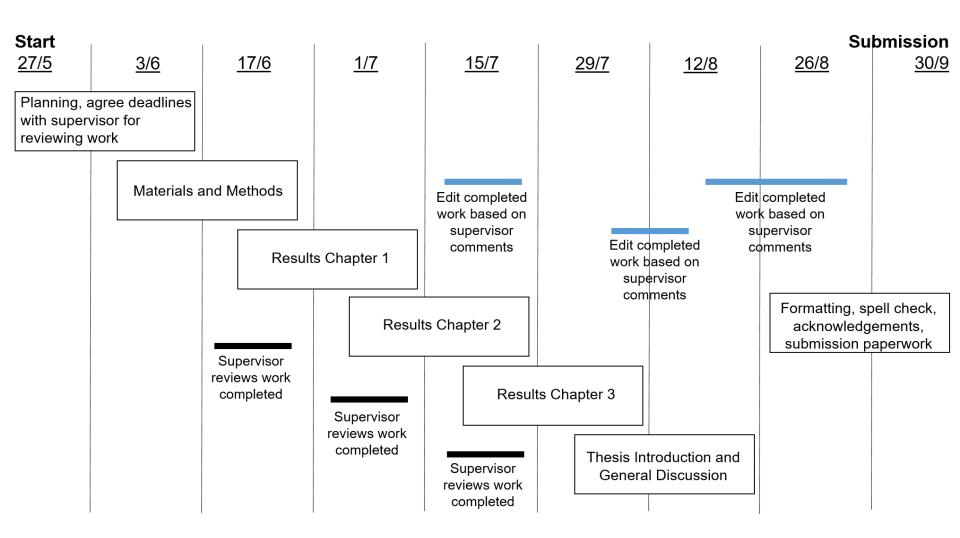


### **The Writing Process**





#### **GANTT Chart**



# **Day-to-Day Timetable**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
09:00 to 11:00	Figure Generating	Results 1	Overall Discussion	Results 2	Results 1	Overall Discussion	Introduction	
11:00 to 11:15	Break							
11:15 to 13:15	Introduction	Results 3	Materials and Methods	Introduction	Results 3	Results 2	Overall Discussion	
13:15 to 14:15	Lunch							
14:15 to 16:15	Results 1	Introduction	LEISURE ACTIVITY (swimming)	Materials and Methods	Results 2	Figure Generating	Results 3	
16:15 to 16:30	Break							
16:30 to 18:30	Overall Discussion	Results 2	Introduction	Results 1	Materials and Methods	Results 3	Figure Generating	
18:30 to 20:30	Dinner and Social Time							
Optional 20:30- 22:30	Results 3	Figure Generating	Results 1	Introduction	Overall Discussion	Materials and Methods	Results 2	

### **SMART Objectives**

# S pecific

Well defined and clear goals

#### M easurable

How will know when its finished?

## A greed upon/(a)chievable

- It is realistic
- Agree with supervisors what goals should be

#### R elevant

Is it "essential" or a "nice to have?"

#### T ime based

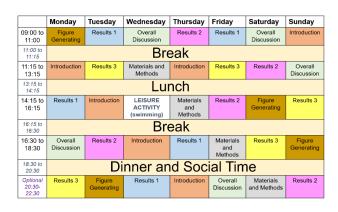
When should it be done?

## Implementation/Intention Table

Task to be completed	Feelings towards it	When (are you going to start it)	Where (are you going to do it)	How (are you going to do it)	<u>Deadline</u>	Reward to completing task

### Activity: Making a Writing Plan

- Using one the techniques described, design a plan to start and/or keep motivated with your thesis writing
- 10 minutes



S pecific

· Well defined and clear goals

M easurable

· How will know when its finished?

A greed upon/(a)chievable

It is realistic

· Agree with supervisors what goals should be

R elevant

· Is it "essential" or a "nice to have?"

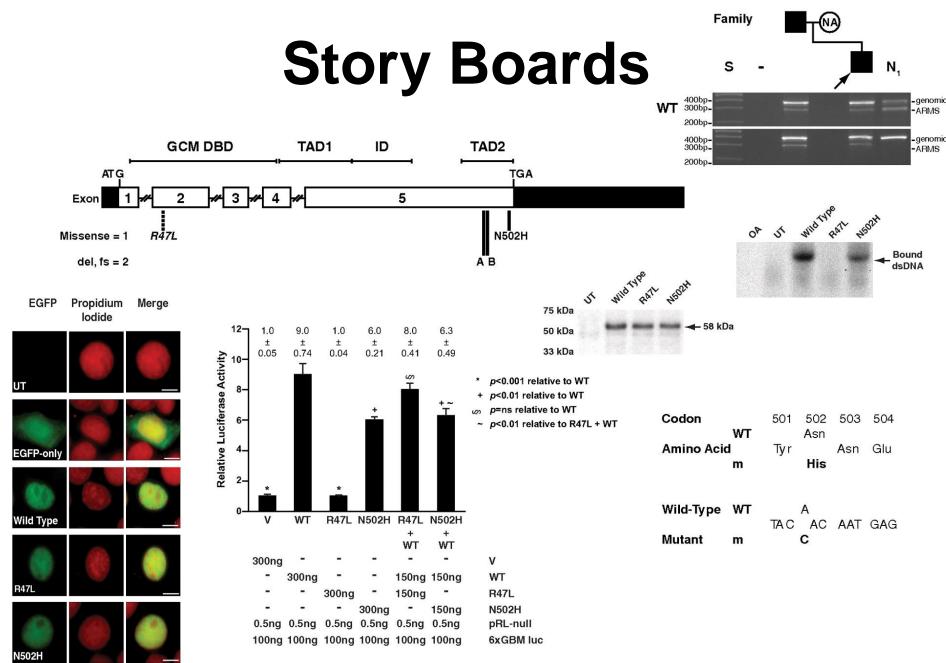
ime based

· When should it be done?

Start			ı	1			Su	bmission
27/5	<u>3/6</u>	<u>17/6</u>	<u>1/7</u>	<u>15/7</u>	<u>29/7</u>	12/8	<u>26/8</u>	30/9
Planning, a with super reviewing v								
	Materials a	and Methods	s Chapter 1	Edit completed work based on supervisor comments	work b	wor	completed k based on upervisor omments	
		Supervisor reviews work completed	Supervisor reviews work completed			troduction and	submission p	

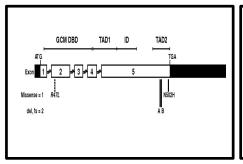
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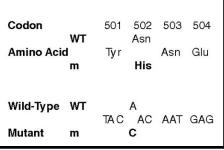


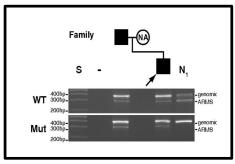


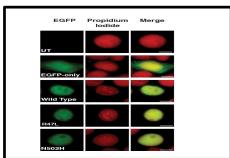
Mirczuk SM et al., (2010) JCEM, 95 (7) 3512-3516

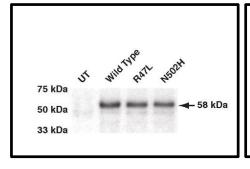
# **Story Boards**

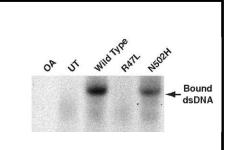


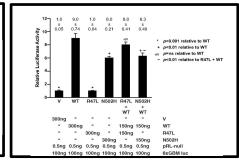






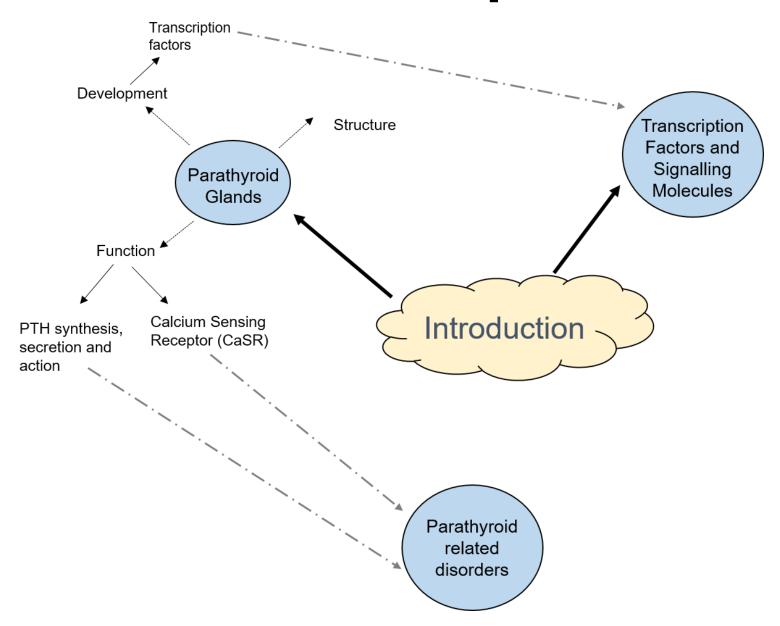








# Mind Maps



# **Writing in Layers**

	Layer 1		Layer 2	Layer 3			
<u>C</u>	Outline of Thesis		Paragraph Outlines		Writing a Paragraph		
1.	Write chapter headings	1.	Write list points want to cover in each section	1.	What is the main point of the paragraph?		
2.	Write 1-2 sentences on contents of chapter: Purpose? What it will cover?	2.	Review list: are any of these more than one point?	2.	Illustrate your point		
3.	Write section headings for each chapter	3.	Are any unnecessary? Can any be dropped?	3.	Discuss your illustration, using examples/evidence: how do these help support your illustration?		
4.	Write sentence about how you will develop each section	4.	Are the points in the right order?				

## Activity: Establishing Productivity

- Using either story board, mind map or writing in layers technique, start to map out your thesis or a thesis chapter
- 10 minutes

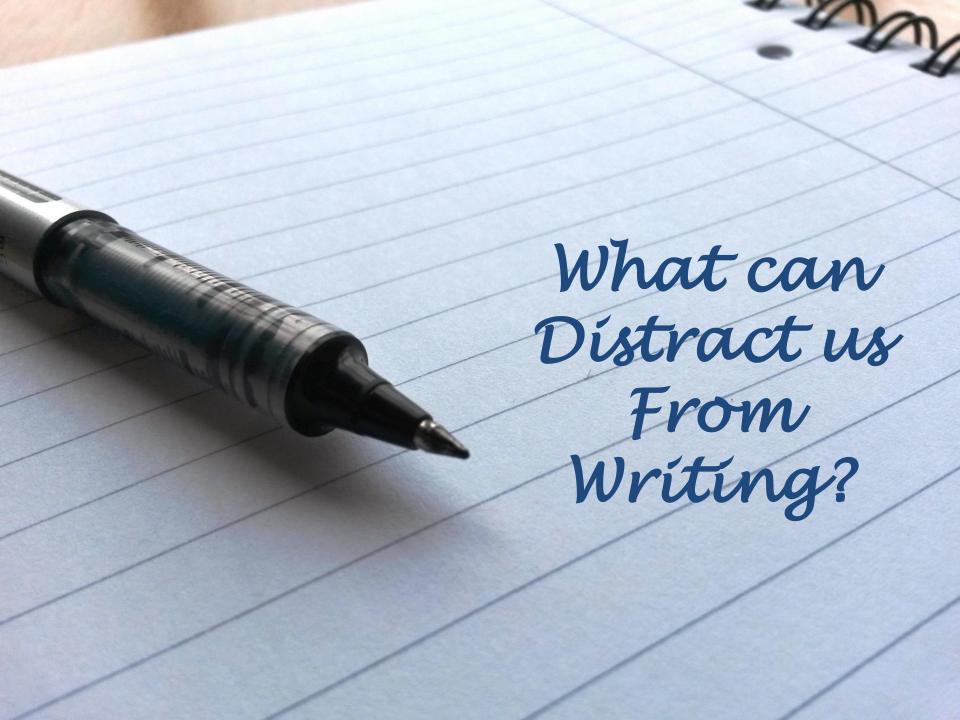


#### **Habits of Productive Writers**

#### The Four Step Approach:

- 1. Establish momentum
- 2. Establish a regime of writing regularly
- 3. Establish comfort
- 4. Establish social skills as a writer

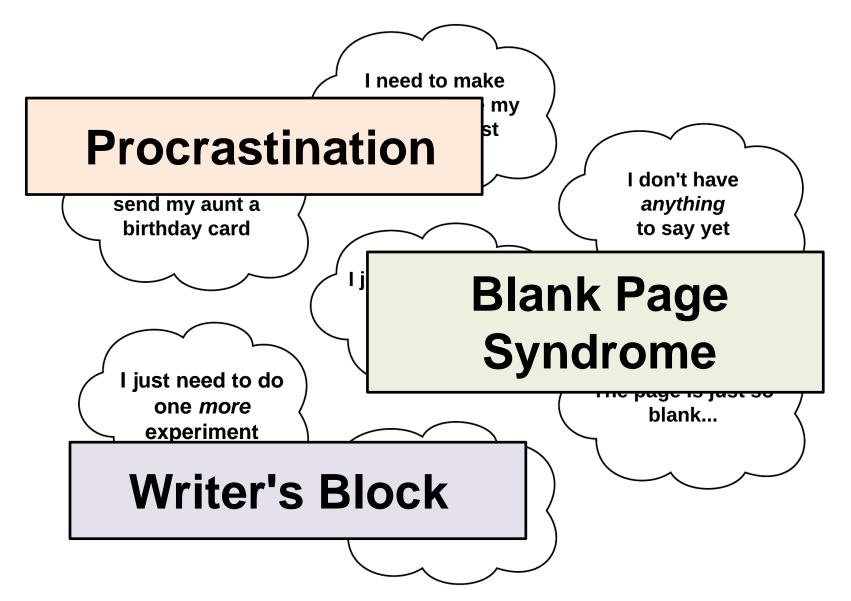
Moxley and Taylor Writing and Publishing for Academic Authors



## What stops you writing?

I need to make sure I've done my planning first I really have to I don't have send my aunt a anything birthday card to say yet I just need to read one more article I just need to do The page is just so one more blank... experiment I'll start on Monday l at the weekend / next week...

# What stops you writing?



## What stops you writing?

to

"Sometimes you just have to get something written; even if it's absolute tripe!" Dr. K. Perera "Don't need to start at the beginning." Dr. C. Lawson

to say yet

"Write the first page, you can always delete it."

Dr. C. Lawson

"A glass of wine can help with the flow of words if you are stuck."

Dr. CA Jones

# Techniques to Help Move on From Distraction

- 1. Free- writing
- 2. Writing to prompts
- 3. Procrastination prevention techniques

#### 1. Free Writing

In sentences / no stopping / no editing stream of thought put on paper

Activity: Free writing exercise

5 minutes to free write an answer to the following question

"How does my work fit into the wider field of knowledge in my research area?"

#### 2. Writing to Prompts

- Write a research summary using the prompts
- Write in full sentences
- No need to reference
- 10 minutes writing time

About 50 words / prompt

My project is about...

The stage I am at now is...

The next step...

What I am interested in finding out is...

For my doctorate "original" means...

Since last week/month I have progressed by...

I have identified a problem with...

# **Useful Prompts**

Introduction/Abstract	Literature Review
What work has been done in this area?	Why is this subject important?
What is your research question?	Who else thinks its important?
What work did you do?	Who has worked on this subject before?
What did you find?	Who has done something similar?
What does this mean?	What are the gaps?
What do you intend to do next?	How does my work relate to the literature?

#### 3. Procrastination Prevention Techniques

#### 1. Blocking devices

- https://www.rescuetime.com (logs what you spend your time on)
- https://freedom.to (internet and app blocker)
- http://www.stickk.com (website to stick to your goals, optionally putting in money that you get back if your achieve your goal but that goes to charity if you don't!)

#### 2. Pomodori

- 1. Set timer e.g. 25minutes
- 2. Work on task until timer rings
- 3. Take 3-5 minutes break
- 4. Resume for a further 25 minutes
- Every 4 pomodori take a longer break

#### 3. Prioritising Table

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	DO	DEFER
Not Important	DELEGATE	DUMP



## Who should review?

### 1. Yourself – after a break

Most likely to spot things that need changing

### 2. Your colleagues in the lab

Experts on techniques and materials

### 3. Your peers in other labs

Are you getting your message across effectively/concisely

## 4. Your supervisor

- Make a plan with supervisor how work is going to be reviewed
- Keep open dialogue with supervisor when writing



## **Problem Words...**

## Know your weaknesses!

# "Fluorescence"

#### How to overcome problem words

- Get some Post-it notes
- Write word onto a Post-it note
- Stick Post-it onto PC/Laptop/Mac/Nearby
- When you come to write word, stop and look at Post-it
- Type out word letter-by-letter

# **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as submitting as one's own work, irrespective of intent to deceive, that which part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgement; or, in the case of self-plagiarism, unless explicitly permitted by regulation, or submitting one's own work that has already been submitted for assessment to satisfy the requirements of any other academic qualification, or submitted for publication without due acknowledgement

(University of Cambridge definition Feb 2019)

It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity.

- quoting verbatim another person's work
- paraphrasing another person's work by changing some of the words, or the order of the words
- using ideas taken from someone else
- cutting and pasting from the Internet to make a pastiche of online sources

https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/

# Copyright

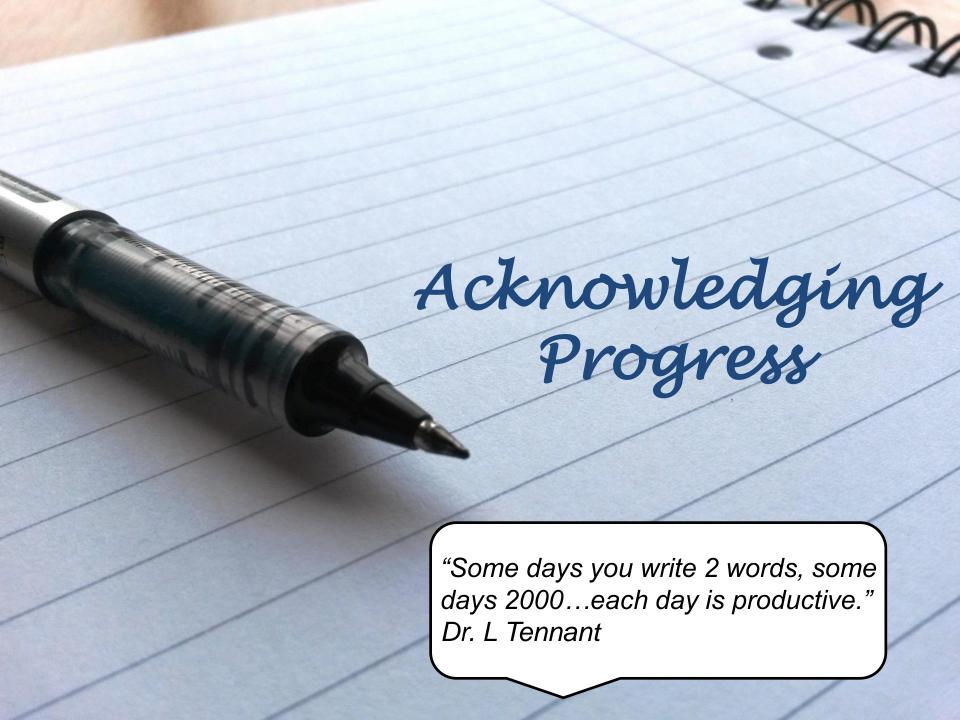
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Questions? Email: <a href="mailto:support@repository.cam.ac.uk">support@repository.cam.ac.uk</a>



# **Acknowledging Progress**

What "progress" means	Your work is enough when
Getting results, good or bad	Your arguments and conclusions are plausible
Being able to explain them	You have made a recognisable contribution to knowledge
Feeling confident in your research	You have achieved some or all your aims
Completing a certain amount of work	
Learning new skills	
Better understanding of what's going on in the literature	



## Next Steps...

- 1. I will check with my supervisor.....2. I will start writing my thesis (when).....3. I will ask the following people to.....
- 4. To help me write I must.....
- 5. When I get stuck I need to tell myself.....

## Time for a break?



"When writing make sure to give yourself regular breaks. It will refresh you, give your brain a short break and help you be more productive." Dr. K Gaynor

## GOOD LUCK!

"Any changes you make, save as a separate document, as you never know if you might need to go back to an earlier draft."

Dr. L. Skleton-Stroud

"Allow time (and money) for printing and binding." "Make regular backups."
"Leave summaries, intros, formatting until the end." "If you have an idea before bed, write it down so it doesn't interrupt your sleep."."

Dr. A. Wigmore

"Start writing as soon as possible"
Dr. D. Aflorei

"Doesn't have to be good or innovative, it just has to be done"

Dr. M. Castle