



Writing your PhD thesis:

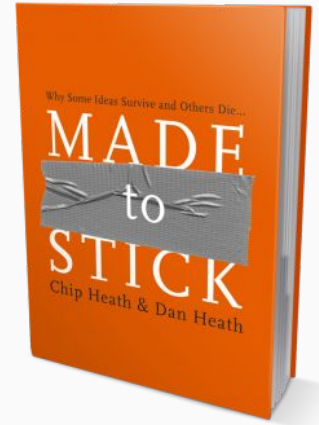
Simple grammar tips to help you write at doctoral level

Dr. Jay Jericho

BCom *Adel*, BEd ProfHons, Grad Cert Ed *Tas*, MEd (Hons), DSocSc *Syd*

jjericho@collegeprofessor.ca

Objective



This presentation offers constructive advice about how to improve your grammar so that you can analyse text and write at doctoral thesis level.

Part 2 of this presentation is forthcoming (August 2016)

This slideshow is part of a 12 part series



Check out some of the other slideshow presentations:

- How to ace your viva voce exam
- How to write a research proposal
- How to write a data analysis chapter
- How to write your literature review chapter
- making a substantial contribution to scholarly knowledge



Jay Jericho



Quality Acrobat document versions of these presentations are at:

www.collegeprofessor.ca/phd-writing-project.html

jjericho@collegeprofessor.ca

15 Points

1. Sic
2. Ellipses
3. Acronyms
4. Wide dash
5. Apostrophes
6. Bold emphasis
7. Square brackets
8. Compound words
9. Numbers as words
10. Italicise latin words
11. Full stops and quotes
12. Indent and shrink longer quotes
13. Single and double quotation marks
14. Italicise publications and productions
15. Non-paginated and undated publications

Compound words

Sometimes a string of words may be regarded as a single word if the collective meaning of the individual words are widely recognised as having one meaning.

These words are recognised as one word if they frequently appear in publications (e. g. books, newspapers) using the dash (hyphen) to connect these words.

Sometimes it is subjective whether you should use the dash to group multiple words to show that you consider them to be one word. When you do this appropriately, it shows you are an advanced writer.

Widely recognised compound words

2 base words

clear-cut

near-future

Team-player

Chief-Commander

3 base words

day-to-day

face-to-face

year-to-date

Commander-in-Chief

Longer compound words

run-of-the-mill

state-of-the-art

Double quotation marks

Double quotation marks are normally used when you quote another source *verbatim*.

Example:

In her interview, participant number 22 ‘Sarah’ stated that she “believes that there is adequate training for staff at her workplace” (Sarah, 2015, p. 1).

Single quotation marks

Single quotation marks are normally used to highlight a word or string, *i.e.* to add emphasis in the reader’s mind.

Single quotation marks may highlight an irregular feature of a word such as the use of colloquial words and coarse language that may not exist in popular dictionaries.

Example:

The term ‘cheesy’ may mean ‘tacky’ even though few dictionaries recognise this definition ‘cheesy’.

Popular acronyms

Acronyms that are frequently used in the public domain sometimes do not need to be defined in your thesis.

You should confirm this with your supervisors and university regulations.

Popular global acronyms

2IC	Second in Charge
3D	Three dimensional
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i>
BCE	Before the common era
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
VP	Vice President
UN	United Nations

Wide dash –

The use of the wide dash serves two main purposes in academic writing.

The first is to denote polar opposite words such as East and West.

Do not leave a space between the wide dash and the words. Do not confuse the wide dash for the hyphen which looks like this -.

The wide dash is also used to denote page references for in text referencing. For example: (Kutie, 2015, pp. 1–2).

The wide dash is also used to denote page ranges when creating your bibliography.

Examples

on–off

yes–no

hot–cold

pass–fail

true–false

north–south

Velayutham, S. (2013), Precarious experiences of Indians in Australia on 457 temporary work visas, *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 24(3), 340–361.

Shrink and indent quotations

Most post-secondary institutes require scholars to indent and shrink the font of text used for long quotations. 'Long' is frequently defined in style guides as being strings of text that are circa 19 words or more. Shorter quotations may be embedded in your paragraphs using normal font size. Example:

My data analysis confirms that poverty is a common theme among all persons interviewed. Comments by 'David' are typical of those made by all participants:

I am fed-up with being so **poor** [my emphasis]. There is evidence of **poverty** [my emphasis] throughout my neighborhood. For example, I see **impoverished** [my emphasis] family homes throughout virtually all street blocks.

David's discussion reiterates my argument that (*etc.*).

Close your paragraph with analytical conceptual discussion.

Bold and italicise text for emphasis

You may bold and italicise text for emphasis.

For qualitative research, this works well when you cite data, such as speech you record during an interview. David's quote on the previous page is a good example.

I am fed-up of being so ***poor*** [my emphasis]. There is evidence of ***poverty*** [my emphasis] throughout my neighborhood. For example, I see ***impoverished*** [my emphasis] family homes throughout virtually all street blocks.

In this example, David's reference to poverty are relevant to the research question. Using the **bold** and **italics** to alter this text brings this important observation to the forefront of the reader's consciousness.

Italicise Latin words

By convention, Latin words should be italicised.

This includes abbreviated Latin words which are widely known.

An example of an abbreviated Latin words is *etcetera (etc.)*

Another example is *id est (i.e.)*, which means 'that is'

Place a full-stop after the abbreviation.

I personally recommend that you avoid using italics in your thesis for other purposes. You might consider using italics for no other purposes other than to emphasise a key word on special occasion. The overuse of italics can irritate the reader.

Popular Latin words

ab initio

e.g. (for example)

et al. (and the others)

per se

pro bono

vis-à-vis

Italicise legislation, regulations, publications

By convention, publications, legislation and other official documents should be italicised when cited in your discussion. These other documents refer to instruments that are similar to legislation. Examples of titles you may italicise include:

- Publications such as journals, magazine, newspapers, books and poems
- Official government regulations such as those that appear in gazettes
- Policy documents such as those published by public institutions and NGOs
- Artistic productions such as movies*.

Examples

Bjork's interview was published in the Sunday edition of *The Guardian*.

Connell's most recent journal article appears in *Gender & Society*.

* Always consult the style guide that governs your examination or publications. For example, some style guides mandate that movie names must be italicised and others do not.

Apostrophes ,

A visible number of PhD students still forget to use apostrophes or do not understand when to use them. An apostrophe denotes ownership.

If ownership is singular, the apostrophe goes before the s:

Martina's athleticism, Roseanne's sense-of-humour, Adele's voice, Jay's doctorate

If there is collective ownership, the apostrophe goes after the s:

These students' publications, Gulf States' oil resources, five Kangaroos' tails

Numbers as words

A popular convention in academic writing is to write numbers less than 13 as words when they appear in your textual discussion (e.g. paragraphs, footnotes).

One exception to this is when you refer to numbers greater than 12 and pair this analysis with numbers smaller than 13. To be consistent, you should write both sets of numbers in numeral form so that there is consistency.

Example 1: We interviewed **eleven** subjects, however **one** volunteer withdrew.

Example 2: We interviewed **13** subjects, however, **3** volunteers withdrew.

The ellipse ...

An ellipse appears as three consecutive full stops between a string of words.

There is a space between the first word and the first full stop and the closing word and the last full stop.

Consider this fictitious example:

This dictionary defines the ellipse as “Full stops that are intended to ... denote excluded text from a passage that is cited.”

This is in fact what the ellipse does. You use it to denote that you have excluded one or more words from a string of text that you have cited.

Do not start or end a quote with an ellipse. The ellipse must be sandwiched between something that you cite, such as words or numbers.

Ellipse example

Many students use ellipses when they quote extract passages from qualitative data e.g. from interviews.

Example:

My data dated 2015 shows that most migrants in Iceland cannot afford to rent their own room. For example, ‘Stella’ (participant number 17) stated that “the cost of renting the most affordable single room ... around 105% of my net pay.”

Square bracket []

The use of a square bracket normally denotes the inclusion of the author's own text within a passage of text which they are citing *verbatim*.

There are two main reasons why this is done:

1. To insert a missing word that it is assumed or known that the original author meant to include in their work.

Inserting this word aids the reader to understand the passage more clearly without having to guess the missing word/s.

2. To offer clarity in cases where the original text does not contain an error.

An example of #2. is when a dated work is reprinted. The original publication date is shown in square brackets to inform the uninformed audience that this work is older than the shown publication date.

Example 1.

Sally stated that she is “not very happy [with] her salary as she believes she is worth much more.”
(Interview respondent 17, 2014, p. 4)

Example 2.

Smith, A. (2016) [1776], The Wealth of Nations,
<<http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>> Accessed 4 July 2016.

Sic

You insert the latin word '*sic*' in square brackets when you wish to show the audience that you are aware that something you are citing or quoting has a flaw. This flaw may include:

- Spelling mistakes
- One or more omitted words
- Violation of grammar rules.

These mistakes may also be numbers. For example, if you are citing a passage that refers to a person's age, and the age is stated as 699 years old, then this must be a mistake. It is most likely 69 or 99.

Dates are frequently published in error as the numbers are placed in an incorrect order, *i.e.*, a typographical (typo) error. For example, the year 2015 AD may appear in error as 2051 AD.

Sic example

Hillary's date of birth as shown on her birth certificate is "20013 [sic] [i.e. 2013]".

The French historian's discussion argues that "the city of Paries [sic] [Paris] remains an influential city in Europe, as it is the capital of one of the most populous nations on this continent." (Swine, 2015, NP)

No date N.D.

When citing a work that has no known publication date, you should acknowledge this in your paragraphs, footnotes and bibliographic references. If you do not do this, your reader may think that you have carelessly excluded the publication date. You cannot assume they will be aware that the publication date is not known or that they will check this. Unknown publication dates may occur when the author is unknown or deceased and so this date cannot be confirmed. It also occur may occur when something is published on the internet but the publication and/or upload date is not known. Some style guides argue that you may assume the current year as the publication date (e.g. 2016).

Example

In text discussion citation:

Queenie (ND, pp. 10–12) argues that society's *etc.*

Queenie, E. (ND), *Wild women*, Suva, Fiji: Free Press.

No page N.P.

A similar principle and logic applies for non-paginated work such as peer-reviewed open-access journals.

Example

Power, Xena (2016), Military leadership in the new millennium, *Minerva*, 11(1), NP.

Power (2016, NP) argues that the new millennium "calls for a paradigm shift in the skills that political leaders seek from their most senior military personnel".

Full stops and quotations

You need to take care where you place a full stop when you are quoting another source in cases where the text that you quote finishes your sentence.

If the text that you cite includes the final words of a sentence from the original source, you place the full stop inside your quotation mark to denote this. Example:

In her opening chapter, King (2016, NP) states that “war is always futile.”

If you complete a sentence with a quote that does not conclude the sentence in the work you are citing, you place your full stop outside your inverted comma.

I concur with Angel (ND, p. 17) that there is a “trajectory towards global peace”.

Further reading

Leicester University (2016), Develop Your Writing - Writing Skills and Technique, <<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/training/eresources/study-guides/thesis/developing>>. This university's open access graduate thesis writing resources are among the best.

Thank you Leicester University.

Free online grammar check resource
<https://www.grammarly.com/>

You
little
PhD
legend,
you

