

How Do I Get Started Writing?

So you are at the point now where you need to get started actually writing your paper. One little trick that I use when I am working on a paper is to really use the outlining process as a sort of short cut. Let me explain, going a bit further than what I did in my message about structuring a paper:

1. First, I do my broadbrush outline--that is what you have done thus far: Roman Numeral I, II, III, IV, V

e.g., I Introduction

II Supporting Hypothesis 1

III Supporting Hypothesis 2

IV Supporting Hypothesis 3

V Conclusion

You might end up having more roman numerals than this, but this is a simple example and a nice point of departure.

2. Then, I do the next level: I fill in the A, B, C level.

I Introduction

A. Research Question and Significance

B. Literature Review: How Other Scholars Have Answered the Question

C. Your Answer

D. Your Methodology

II. Chapter 2: Supporting Hypothesis 1 [In some cases, this would be the place to give historical background or the lit review instead, depending on the length of these items. I mentioned in this in my little article about how to write your Introduction]

A. Point 1

B. Point 2

C. Point 3

III. Chapter 3: Supporting Hypothesis 2 (etc.)

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3. Next, I go to the level of 1, 2, 3 under A., B., and C. These can be data that you bring to bear as proof of Points 1, 2, and 3.

4. This process can continue in the same manner, with your next step being to go down to the a., b., c. level: Here's an example:

I. Introduction

A. Research Question and Significance

1. Research Question: What is it? Why are you asking it?

- a. The example of Latin American Theologians
 - b. The significance of Christianity in Korea
2. Significance: Who cares?
- B. etc.

Do print this out. It will be clearer on paper than it is on the computer screen. What's cool about this method is that by the time to finish filling in the outline in this level of detail, your writing is practically done. All that remains for you to do is:

1. Verify that all the logical links are there.
2. Verify that you have the data to fill in in each place. I do this as I begin to write each chapter again.
3. Write out the outline in prose, filling in the references as notes (in text is better, but footnotes is fine). Because you have had the foresight to take your notes (or print them out) on 5x7 cards and have 3x5 cards with the full bibliographical data, you can do this quickly. If you are using Citation or Bibloscape software, this part moves along almost automatically. In any case, use the Turabian Guide/Manual to help you determine what pieces of information must be there for each source cited.

Voila! You've got a first draft of your Intro/Chapter! And of every chapter thereafter.

Then you read it over, being sure to be critical about your argument. What are the dependent and independent variables or the various elements of the theoretical framework of the philosophy that you are trying to explain?

Run a Spell-check and Grammar-Check.

Correct those Errors.

Reread the chapter out loud, in order to force yourself not to skip over any missed or erroneous words (Spell and grammar checks don't catch many errors). Grammar is critical--because it is nothing more than the relationships between the words that determine that your audience understands what you mean to say.

As you read each sentence, make sure that you have said precisely what you wanted to say! Always choose the right word. If you're not sure, double check a dictionary.

Do a final stylistic check--you might use Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* to make sure that you're on target here.

Well, that's it!

Remember to enjoy the writing process! What you are doing is *crafting* a fine piece of writing that will help others to understand the puzzle that you have identified.