

# How do I...

## WRITE LIKE A RESEARCHER

Just as the old saying goes “When in Rome, do as the Romans”, graduate research candidates need to write as researchers do. Research writing has conventions that differ from those used for fiction, journalism, advertising and business. These conventions not only communicate a researcher’s theories and findings but also form their identity and grant them entry into research communities. So, you want to write like a researcher? Here are some tips on how to start.

### USE OPENINGS TO MAKE YOUR POINT EXPLICIT

Announce your main idea up front: in the first chapter of a thesis, first paragraph of an article/chapter, and first sentence of a paragraph. Then provide evidence to support, explain and illustrate the point. Use the concluding chapter, paragraph or sentence to reinforce the key message or to link the point to your next idea.

### KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Not all research writing is intended to be read by fellow researchers in your field or sub-discipline, so take care how you use “jargon”. Jargon refers to specialist words or phrases that have specific meanings in academic or professional fields; using jargon in journal articles will help you identify with your academic community. On the other hand, jargon can also alienate readers from other fields and non-specialist readers. So, if you’re writing for a general intelligent audience, such as the university community or research grant assessors, make sure your jargon and acronyms are explained on first use.

### READ!

Experienced researchers are great readers. They read not just in their field of study but also across disciplines to broaden their knowledge and cultivate multiple perspectives on their research problems. By devoting time and effort into reading and reflecting, you’ll be better able to identify what’s needed to fill an important knowledge gap, position your project to fill that gap, and relate your idea to the theories or arguments of others.

### WRITE TO THINK

Successful researchers use writing as a tool to discover and

refine their ideas. So, read to write and write to think! Once you get your thoughts on paper, you can interrogate and strengthen your thoughts and arguments. You can also get wider and more effective feedback on written ideas than merely spoken ones.

### SEEK AND GIVE FEEDBACK

As a research candidate, you’ll get feedback from your supervisors, but you don’t have to stop there! You can get feedback on your writing from journal reviewers, co-authors, academics, professionals in your field, Graduate Research Development Advisors, Peer Writing Assistants, fellow graduate research candidates, and even friends and family. Ask for honest feedback and advice: constructive criticism is more useful than blind praise.

Giving feedback on other researchers’ drafts can also improve your own writing. It can open your eyes to what works and what doesn’t, and how to seek, deliver and receive feedback effectively and graciously. Joining a committed research writing group for at least 6 months is time well spent.

### RELATED “HOW DO I...” GUIDES

- Get constructive feedback from my supervisor(s)
- Make the most of feedback
- Get my thesis professionally edited

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*How Do I...?* Guidelines are produced by the Graduate Research Development team for graduate research candidates. They provide succinct, user-friendly advice consistent with best practice and MQ Policy and Procedures at time of writing

#### FIND OUT MORE

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