

— **TEMPLATE INSTRUCTIONS. DELETE SECTION BEFORE SUBMISSION.** —

This Microsoft Word® template is provided to help you prepare your thesis or dissertation for submission to Georgia Southern Commons (GS Commons) in accordance with the College of Graduate Studies (COGS) formatting requirements, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA. Before you begin, read the Instructions below. They explain how to use the styles in this template, how to preserve accessibility as you write, and formatting items that you may want to check with your Committee Chair if you have questions.

How to Use This Template

1. Open the Styles pane in Microsoft Word (Home tab → Styles group → small arrow or press Alt+Ctrl+Shift+S).

2. Do NOT manually format headings with bold or font size. Instead, apply the built-in styles already configured in this template:

- "Heading 1" — for CHAPTER titles, front-matter page titles (ABSTRACT, DEDICATION, etc.), REFERENCES, and APPENDIX titles.
- "Heading 2" — for chapter subheadings (flush left, italicized, title case).
- "Heading 3" — for sub-subheadings if you need a third level (confirm before using).
- "Normal" — for all body paragraphs (double-spaced, 0.5" first-line indent, Times New Roman 12pt).
- "Quote" or the "Block Quote" paragraph style — for block quotations (double-spaced, 0.5" left indent, no first-line indent, no quotation marks).

3. Fill in every [BRACKETED PLACEHOLDER] with your own information. Bracketed placeholders in red/italics are guidance text you should delete.

4. Update the Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures after you finish writing. Right-click each one and choose "Update Field" → "Update entire table."

5. Each chapter should begin on a new page. The template applies page breaks automatically when you use the CHAPTER heading style.

6. Before submission, run the accessibility tools described below.

Accessibility Requirements You Must Meet

Your thesis or dissertation must conform to WCAG 2.1 Level AA, including:

- Use built-in heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) in a logical hierarchy. Do not skip levels.
- Provide alternative text (alt text) for every image, chart, graph, or figure. In Word: right-click the image → View Alt Text → describe content AND purpose. Decorative-only images should be marked as such.
- Identify header rows in every table. Select the header row → Table Design tab → check "Header Row." Also right-click → Table Properties → Row tab → check "Repeat as header row at the top of each page."
- Keep tables simple. Avoid merged or split cells where possible. Use one row per record.
- Use descriptive link text. "U.S. Census Data 2024" — not "click here" or a bare URL.
- Ensure sufficient color contrast (WCAG 2.1 requires a 4.5:1 ratio for normal text).
- Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning.

- Set the document language. File → Info → check that Language shows English (United States) or your intended language.

- Set the document title in document properties. File → Info → Properties → Title.

Check Accessibility Before Submission

Run the Microsoft Word® Accessibility Checker (Review tab → Check Accessibility) and resolve every "Error" and "Warning." If your thesis or dissertation is 20 or more pages, ensure that bookmarks are present (Insert → Links → Bookmark).

Things to Check Before Submission

Check with your Committee Chair if you have questions about any of the following before you submit your thesis or dissertation:

- **HEADING 3 STYLE.** Heading 3 is configured as flush left, bold, title case, in Times New Roman 12pt. Confirm with your Committee Chair before using Heading 3 for sub-subheadings.

- **PAGE NUMBER SECTIONING.** The ETD Approval page should be page 1. The Abstract, Title, and Copyright pages appear before page 1 and therefore should have no page number. This template uses two sections to accomplish this: a front section (no page numbers) and a main section (page numbers starting at 1). Double-check the page numbers before submitting.

- **PAGE BREAKS.** This template places page breaks before chapters and each front-matter section (Dedication, Acknowledgments, Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures, References, and each Appendix) because these are conventionally on separate pages in ETDs. Confirm with your Committee Chair that this is the expected formatting of the front-matter.

- **NO RUNNING HEADS.** Running heads are not used unless specifically requested by your program. This template includes no running head. If your program requires one, add it by double-clicking the header and editing it, keeping the page number right-aligned.

- **PARAGRAPH SPACING.** Paragraphs are double-spaced with no additional space before or after a paragraph. This template sets all body paragraphs to line spacing of 480 (double), with 0pt before and 0pt after. Confirm with your Committee Chair that this is the expected formatting of paragraphs.

- **TOC/LIST FIELD CODES.** This template uses automatic field codes that generate the TOC and Lists from your heading styles, table captions, and figure captions. This is preferable for accessibility because the TOC becomes a navigable list of links for screen readers and easier to maintain. Confirm with your Committee Chair that automatic field codes are acceptable. Right-click each field and choose "Update Field" before submission.

- **ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES CONTACT.** Confirm that you have added the correct contact(s) with the College of Graduate Studies before submission.

- **SAMPLE CONTENT.** The chapter titles, abstract text, dedication, acknowledgments, references, and appendix content in this template are illustrative only. Replace all of it with your own content.

— END OF INSTRUCTIONS. DELETE SECTION BEFORE SUBMISSION. —

[FULL TITLE OF YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION]

by

[YOURFIRSTNAME YOURLASTNAME]

Under the Direction of [Major Professor's Name]

ABSTRACT

[Replace this placeholder with your abstract. Your abstract should not exceed 350 words and should be formatted as a single paragraph with no first-line indentation. Do not start the abstract with "This thesis" or "This dissertation" — begin directly with your research question or problem statement. Index terms follow the abstract in a separate paragraph, as shown below.]

INDEX TERMS: [Index term 1], [Index term 2], [Index term 3], [Index term 4], [Index term 5], [Index term 6], [Index term 7]

[Capitalize only the first letter of each term unless the term is a title or proper noun. Do not include "Dr." with your major professor's name.]

[FULL TITLE OF YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION]

by

[YOURFIRSTNAME] [YOURMIDDLEINITIAL (optional)]. [YOURLASTNAME]

[Previous Degree 1], [Granting Institution], [Year]

[Previous Degree 2], [Granting Institution], [Year]

A [Thesis OR Dissertation] Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

[DEGREE IN ALL CAPS — e.g., DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY]

[COLLEGE OF _____ — optional; delete this line if omitting]

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All Rights Reserved

[FULL TITLE OF YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION]

by

[YOURFIRSTNAME] [YOURMIDDLEINITIAL(optional)]. [YOURLASTNAME]

Major Professor: [First Last]

Committee: [First Last]

[First Last]

[First Last]

Electronic Version Approved:

[Month Year]

DEDICATION

[This page is optional. If you choose to include a dedication, replace this placeholder with your dedication text. If you do not wish to include a dedication, delete this entire page (including the DEDICATION heading above) and update the Table of Contents.]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

[This page is optional. If you choose to include acknowledgments, replace this placeholder with your own text. Note: there is no "E" between the "G" and "M" in ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. If you do not wish to include acknowledgments, delete this entire page (including the ACKNOWLEDGMENTS heading above) and update the Table of Contents.]

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[After you finish writing: right-click the Table of Contents above → Update Field → Update entire table. The TOC will populate automatically from your heading styles. If no entries appear, confirm that you have applied Heading 1, Heading 2, and/or Heading 3 styles to your chapter titles and subheadings.]

LIST OF TABLES

[This list will populate automatically when you insert tables with captions (Insert tab → References group → Insert Caption → Label: "Table"). To generate or update the list: References tab → Insert Table of Figures → Caption label: Table → OK. If your thesis/dissertation does not contain tables, delete this entire page (including the LIST OF TABLES heading above) and update the Table of Contents.]

Table 1: [Title of table]

[page #]

LIST OF FIGURES

[This list will populate automatically when you insert figures with captions (Insert tab → References group → Insert Caption → Label: "Figure"). To generate or update the list: References tab → Insert Table of Figures → Caption label: Figure → OK. If your thesis/dissertation does not contain figures, delete this entire page (including the LIST OF FIGURES heading above) and update the Table of Contents.]

Figure 1: [Title of figure]

[page #]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

[Replace this placeholder with the opening paragraph of your Introduction. Use complete paragraphs with a 0.5" first-line indent, double-spaced, left-aligned (not justified). Do not add blank lines between paragraphs — the first-line indent alone signals a new paragraph. State your research question, problem, or purpose clearly in this section.]

[Continue with additional paragraphs as needed. Apply the "Normal" style to every body paragraph so formatting remains consistent.]

How This Study Is Original

[Describe how your study contributes new knowledge, methods, or perspectives. Explain what distinguishes it from prior work in the field.]

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Prior Research

[Replace this placeholder with your literature review. Use paraphrase rather than direct quotation where possible. When a direct quotation exceeds 40 words (APA) or meets your program's block-quotation threshold, format it as a block quote as shown below.]

For example, as [Author] notes in [Source],

[Place a block-quoted passage here. Block quotations are double-spaced, indented 0.5" from the left margin, carry no quotation marks, and cite the source parenthetically at the end. Do not add a first-line indent to a block quotation.] ([Author Year, p. page])

[Resume body text here. Note that the line following a block quotation does not require a first-line indent if it continues the same paragraph of thought; use the "Quote" or "Block Quote" style for the quotation and the "Normal" style for surrounding paragraphs.]

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Study Design

[Describe your study design. The sample table and figure below illustrate the required formatting for any tables or figures you include.]

Sample Table and Figure

Table 1 reports [brief description].

Table 1. [Descriptive Table Title in Title Case]

Subject	Weight Gain (Loss)	Daily Avg. Caloric Intake	Self-Reported Cause
A	+ 7.5 kg	2,800	[Replace with self-reported cause]
B	+ 6.2 kg	2,600	[Replace with self-reported cause]
C	(-4.5 kg)	1,800	[Replace with self-reported cause]
D	+ 0.5 kg	2,000	[Replace with self-reported cause]

[For accessibility: after inserting a table, select the header row → Table Design tab → check "Header Row." Also right-click the table → Table Properties → Row tab → check "Repeat as header row at the top of each page." Avoid merged cells where possible. Figure captions, in contrast, FOLLOW the figure and use the format shown below.]

[Insert figure here. Right-click the inserted image → View Alt Text and add a concise description of BOTH content AND purpose. Decorative-only images should be marked as such.]

Figure 1. [Descriptive Figure Title in Title Case.]

[If your figure is too wide for portrait orientation, use a landscape section break. Page numbers on landscape pages should appear in the header (flush right) so they remain visible on

screen; in a bound print copy the number may fall into the binding, which is acceptable per COGS.]

CHAPTER 4

USING A JOURNAL ARTICLE AS A CHAPTER

[If you are using a published article, an article that has been accepted but not yet printed, an article under consideration by a journal, or an article that you plan to submit to a journal, you should introduce the chapter by explaining the status of the article and document it with a footnote.]

The title of this chapter is the title of the article. See the footnote at the bottom of this page for an example of the attribution footnote¹.

¹Ample, Justin X., and Grady Tripp. 2024. *Psychological Insights* 3038: 53–58. Reprinted here with permission of the publisher. [Replace with your own citation. Footnotes are single-spaced, 10-point Times New Roman, flush left, with no hanging indent.]

REFERENCES

[Replace this placeholder with your reference list formatted in the citation style required by your discipline (APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian, etc.). Web addresses (URLs/DOIs) may be included but should not be underlined, colored, or hyperlinked — use black, plain text. Descriptive link text should be used for any links that ARE clickable elsewhere in your document.] Be sure references all are hanging indented.

[Sample APA entry:]

Jones, R., & Smith, S. (2018). Title of an excellent article. *The Journal of Excellent Articles*, 19(60), 1042–1049. <https://doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyy>

[Sample MLA entry:]

Jones, R., and S. Smith. "Title of an Excellent Article." *The Journal of Excellent Articles*, vol. 19, no. 60, 2018, pp. 1042–49.

[Sample Chicago/Turabian entry:]

Jones, Rikki, and Stan Smith. 2018. "Title of an Excellent Article." *The Journal of Excellent Articles* 19 (60): 1042–1049.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE APPENDIX TITLE

[Replace this placeholder with the content of your first appendix. Appendix content that consists of your own text should be double-spaced. If the appendix contains documents, forms, or data, include them as appropriately tagged tables or as accessible images with alt text. Each appendix begins on its own page and is labeled APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B, and so on.]