

Taking Inventory

Purpose: This activity will act as a guide for continuing your thesis or dissertation writing following your proposal or initial drafting process. It will ask you to look back at the goals you initially set for your writing, goals that you may wish to revise, and outline the remainder of your writing.

Part 1: Re-Affirming Goals

Description: Turn your attention back to the goals that you set for your writing at your initial brainstorming and drafting stages.

What is the topic? Has it evolved since you began? _____

Why did you choose your topic? _____

Where have you focused most of your writing so far? _____

My manuscript is currently _____ pages and _____ chapters (or sections). At this stage, I believe that my final product will be _____ pages and _____ chapters (or sections).

I want my chapters to be (choose one) _____ varying lengths _____ about the same length as each other.

I want to write about _____ pages per week.

I want to have _____ writing sessions per week that last about _____ (time).

I want to talk to my advisor _____ times per month.

I want the rough draft of my manuscript to be complete by this date: _____.

I want the committee-ready draft of my manuscript to be complete by this date: _____.

(Remember that final defenses usually occur four to five weeks before the end of the semester to allow for COAS and Grad School edits).

My manuscript currently includes _____ sources.

- In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources. In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources.
- In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources. In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources.
- In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources. In chapter _____ I hope to discuss _____ sources.

I feel that my thesis still lacks the following elements/sections: _____.

One thing I want to keep about my thesis is: _____.

Part 2: Writing with the End in Mind - Develop a Preliminary Table of Contents

Description: Where should I begin? Recognize that everyone starts the writing-intense portion at different points. Depending on how much of the writing you completed during the Proposal stage and what sort of thesis you are writing, this portion of the writing process will be a little different. However, no matter where you find yourself at this stage, the best thing to bear in mind is that you need to have the ending in sight. To that end, you will develop a preliminary table of contents that will act as a kind of outline. For each chapter or section, include the title, the numbering, and a brief description of the subject. You may also find that you can develop an outline of each chapter using a similar method. For each section, include at least one discussion point or topic you wish to discuss before moving on.

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Other tips for continuing your writing:

- After plotting and outlining your chapters and sections, stick to working on one chapter at a time.
- Remind the reader where they are going. Use a technique called **purposeful redundancy** (Bui, 122) to remind the audience about main points, the research problem, and the topic as you intend to argue it. Do not summarize previous sections but instead provide the audience with a paragraph or two of your argument as it relates only to the topic in that chapter. You can repeat this with each individual chapter.
- Wait until you have a draft of each of your chapters before revising the beginning chapters.
- You will have time to revise and edit later. It's better to write something clunky or disorganized or even skeletal now and return to fix it later.
- Don't lose track of your sources, **especially** your source page numbers. Although you should revise and evaluate each of your sources again later, it will be extremely difficult to sort through all of your source page numbers if you accidentally lose them. Better to keep track of them now.
- Stick to your schedule; it is better to be meeting the minimum of your goals for yourself rather than push yourself one week and end up falling behind in your next week.
- Know when to move on; when you feel that you have completed a topic discussion, go to the next.

- Stay flexible, but don't change completely. Expand and add more than you change and delete.