

Stylesheet: How to Structure Written Work

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1 General Remarks

This is *not* a universal stylesheet, but a guide to structuring and presenting assignments, essays and dissertations. It does *not* include details on bibliographic presentation, spelling, footnotes etc. It only addresses the **structure of the constituent parts of the text and how to present them correctly**.

We must distinguish two aspects:

- Structure: The structure of the text
- Presentation: The layout of the page, typeface and so on

When you *write*, you should in the first instance be concerned about the structure and meaning of what you write, so that you include all you need in the right place. When you have finished, you should carefully *edit* the final lay-out. If you follow the rules on text structuring described here, editing should be straight-forward.

2 Structure

A published book or a thesis consists of three parts: Front matter, text and back matter. The *front matter* contains the formal information about the text and declarations about its context. The *text* is the academic analysis in itself, any notes and the bibliographical data. The *back matter* consists of ancillary materials, like abbreviation lists, glossaries, chronologies, and other appendices.

In most cases you should avoid back matter. If material is significant, it should be cited and analysed in the text (and proper references should be made to the source), and if it is not significant enough, it should be left out. There are very few exceptions in theses, dissertations, assignments, term papers, essays and reports where appendices of any sort are needed. If in doubt, talk to your supervisor.

2.1 Front Matter

The front matter should contain:

1. The title page with full name of author, full title of the work, location and date or year of publication. In the case of theses, dissertations and term papers, each university will have specific demands for information to be included and the format. In the case of books, title and author are on the title page, and detailed publication information is normally in the colophon on the reverse of the title page.
2. Where appropriate, an abstract and/or preface

3. A table of contents. To start on an odd page number (right hand page)
4. Where appropriate, lists of figures, illustrations and tables. To start on an odd page number (right hand page)
5. Where appropriate, a list of abbreviations, glossary of personal or geographical names, tables of weights, measures or symbols used.¹ To start on an odd page number (right hand page)

After the (unnumbered) title page, you must include a table of contents. It should start on a new, right-hand page and be followed by a new page and be headed “Table of contents,” “Contents” or something else as appropriate. (Use Microsoft Word `Insert` → `Reference` → `Index and Tables`, the tab called “table of contents.”)² Once you have inserted a table of contents and subsequently make changes in your text, you must right click on the table of contents and refresh it.)

There must be consecutive page numbers on all pages except the front page (but the front page must be counted as page 1). If you prefer, you may number the front matter pages with small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv etc.).

2.2 Text

The text is subdivided into chapters, sections and one or two layers of subsections.³ Each chapter must be named “Chapter” and be numbered with Roman or Arabic numerals and indicated through font size and style (heading level 1). Sections, sub-sections and sub-sub-sections should be indicated by font size and style (heading levels 2-4), and where appropriate numbering (see below). Each chapter, section and subsection should have a heading title that concisely indicates the contents. A piece of good advice is to avoid empty headings like “Introduction,” “Background,” “Literature Review,” “The Setting,” “Conclusion,” or “Further Perspectives,” for they tell the reader pretty little about what is inside. You can signal that a chapter or section is an introduction in the following format: “Introduction: The origins of ethnic tensions in East Timor.” (In Microsoft Word use `Format` → `Styles and Formatting` to list the format styles. You can choose between several, normally at least “normal” and “headings” 1–4. Use the headings for title and the various section heading levels. Use normal for paragraph text.)

2.2.1 How many sections and how many layers of sections?

If you write a 2,500 or 3,000 word piece of work you are very unlikely to use more than one layer of sectioning. You would probably divide the work into 3 or 4 sections, depending on the topic.

Think of it as follows: The first section explains what the core issue is, how important it is, how other people have discussed it, and how you are going to analyse it, using which type of sources. The next few sections give details of your analysis, each reflecting a specific issue or angle. The last section pulls together the findings from the other sections.

If you write a larger work of 10,000–15,000 words, you are more likely to divide the text up into five or six sections, or you can choose to have very few sections, but to subdivide them into sub-section (and occasionally into sub-sub-sections). It is not advisable to use more layers of sub-divisions, even

¹Where brief, listed information is considered important for easy reading, it is appropriate to include it in the front matter; anything longer than a page or intrinsically complex should be included in an appendix if at all.

²Good, standard outcomes can be achieved with the use of MS Word, the free office suite Open Office Writer, and most other WYSIWYG word processors. High quality output can be achieved with L^AT_EX, Omega and similar text processing software. The examples used here refer to MS Word, but this document is generated with L^AT_EX; detailed features of this document therefore differ from standard formats achieved with MS Word, but both are equally valid.

³Do not use the terms “chapter” or “part” for the divisions of short works. If a work is less than approximately 10,000 words, the sub-units should be “sections.”

if Microsoft Word and other word processing software allows many more layers, for it is hard for the reader to follow.

If you write a book-length work (anywhere between 50,000 and 300,000 words), like a thesis (typically 70,000–100,000 words), you will divide it up into an appropriate number of Chapters (each normally between 5,000 and 10,000 words).

The main rule is to make the chapter and section division according to the content and meaning of the text; there is no simple principle that you can stick to. However, it is a good idea to have a look at your sections when you are about to finish writing:

- If the chapters, sections and sub-sections are very uneven in length and structure, there may be something wrong. Can you shorten, divide or balance them better?
- If you do not divide the text in chapters and sections (or only in very few), your work may become difficult to follow. Can you guide the reader through your argument, using the way you divide the text up?
- The ultimate test is to take the chapter, section and sub-section titles as a bullet point list. Does it make sense as such a list? Can you see the argument emerge from the bullet list? Would you be able to use it as a PowerPoint presentation, talking about the topic?

2.2.2 Using chapter and section titles as a writing guide

It is a good idea to write the section and subsection headings already at the drafting stage and “fill in” the rest of the text—this helps the writing process and allows you to more easily see where you should put your effort.

It is good practice to number the sections, subsections, and sub-sub-sections. The normal is to use Arabic numerals, separated by points, like the present document: “1 General Remarks,” “2.1 Front Matter,” and “2.2.1 How many . . .” However, it is not necessary to do this.

You should use Microsoft Word’s heading styles to create section headings, as this automatically solves the problem of numbering and font format, table of contents and so on. It also provides you with flexible and automatic renumbering during the writing process as you add new sections or move them around.

3 Text Blocks

3.1 The Paragraph

The most common text block is the paragraph. In English usage, each first paragraph after a section or sub-section heading begins at the left margin. Each paragraph ends with “a carriage-return and a line-feed” (to use typewriter-jargon). That means, in computer terms, that the paragraph ends with one (and only one) hit on the RETURN-key.

Each subsequent paragraph begins with the first line indented about five spaces from the left margin (like, incidentally, in the present text). (Microsoft Word enables this: Highlight the relevant paragraphs and go to *Layout* → *Paragraph* and set “indentation: special” to “first line.”).

Some people prefer a small gap between paragraphs; In Word, go to *Layout* → *Paragraph* and set “spacing: before” to “6pt”). If you do not indent each paragraph, you are advised to add such a small gap before each new paragraph to make reading easier.

There are several types of text alignment:

Left and right alignment: This is the normal text alignment used in professionally printed books and journals. It normally called “justification,” and means that all lines in a paragraph, except the first

and the last, start on the left margin and end on the right margin. The first line is either indented *or* starts on the left margin; the last line in the paragraph ends as required by the length of the text. Because words and letters tend to differ in length, justification is achieved by adding space between words to fill the line. The result in MS Word tends to be very ugly, often more so in print than on the screen. If you want to use justification in MS Word, please avoid fonts larger than 11 pt Times New Roman on A4 paper with standard margins and make sure to enable automatic word division (hyphenation) to achieve acceptable results. Even so, the results tend to be of a very poor quality compared to professional type setting, and on balance I do in general discourage its use.

Left alignment: This is the normal text alignment that was used in the days of the mechanical typewriter—one would type as far as possible towards the right margin and make a shift+return after the last word that fitted on the line. It is also widely used in word processing because justification often is problematic (as described above). The result is a “ragged right” margin. As the spacing between the words in each line is equal, the text tends to be very readable. To avoid too much “raggedness,” you are advised to enable automatic word division (hyphenation) if this is possible. All chapter and section titles should be left aligned.

Right alignment: This alignment is only used where a short line needs to end on the right margin. In word processing (but not in professional type setting) it is often used to place name and address of sender and the date in the upper right corner of letters. The result is a “ragged left” margin. This type of alignment is rarely used.

Centering: This alignment is used to place lines so that the first and last letter of each line is on a position equidistant from the central point between the margins. This feature is often used for captions.

Accordingly, you must consider whether you want your text to be justified or left aligned. **You must be consistent throughout and avoid mixing the two.**

3.2 The Quotation

There are two types of quotations: (a) The inline quotation is used for brief quotations of a few words to a (not too long) sentence. It is set off from the rest of the text with the use of inverted commas “ ”; and (b) The indented quotation, which is separated from the rest of the text by being indented at least five spaces from the left margin (and often also a similar amount from the right margin, like here below):

The quote must be clearly separate from all other text, so that the reader knows that it is originally written by somebody else than the author. It is, by the way a good idea to avoid too many quotes in your work. It is much better to render other people’s ideas in your own words, presenting your own understanding of them.

3.3 Lists

There are three main types of lists, the ordered (or enumerating) list, the unordered (or itemising or bullet-point) list and the description list. They can be nested in each other, as below.

- The main use of unordered lists is to highlight data, where the sequence cannot be established according to one main principle or where the sequence for other reasons must be arbitrary.
- For all items where a sequential listing criterion is obvious, like time, size, rank, importance, please use numbered lists

1. Ordered lists are ranked lists, so if the order of the items is arbitrary, it is better to use unordered (bullet) lists.
2. It is not all ordered items that are best represented in ordered lists. While a list of “how-to-dos,” like “first you do this, then that” can ideally be ordered, a chronology can probably best be rendered as a description list.
 - (a) Further nesting of enumerated lists is possible
 - (b) However, you must be careful not to overdo the use of such features. They also easily become difficult to edit.
3. If you have many, and deeply nested lists in your work, it is almost certainly a sign of a problem. People tend to list things in order to avoid discussing them seriously.

Description lists are very efficient if you want to list names of people and places, briefly describing them. It is also eminent for presenting dates in a chronology, followed by details of the events.

Other Uses for description lists can easily be invented as it is very flexible.

Use Microsoft Word list buttons (“Numbering” and “Bullet”) on the button menu to set ordered and unordered lists. To create a description list, you must use `Format` → `Paragraph` and set “Indentation: Special” to “hanging” and use boldface (**b** button) to highlight the description term.

3.3.1 Bibliographic Lists

At the end of your work, you should include a “list of references.” The heading title should be at the level of chapters or sections, whichever is the highest in your work, but should not be numbered as a chapter or section.

The list should be strictly alphabetical by author surnames and include all works in one and only one concurrent list, unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise.

The list should use the “Hanging Indentation” feature of `Format` → `Paragraph`, use the same font size as “normal” text. The line spacing should be 1, and the “Spacing Before” should be set to 6 pt.

3.4 Tables

If you need to include numbers or other tabular data, be sure to edit them properly. Word provides some good layout templates for tables. Use them. Make sure that all tables have captions stating what they show.

Use tables sparingly, and only include data you actively analyse in your text. A table of three to five rows and three or four columns is much more efficient than a table of ten columns and ten rows. It is important only to include data of essence for your discussion, so you must spend some time thinking about the best way of presenting them. (In Microsoft Word, use `Table` → `Insert Table` to design a table.)

3.5 Graphs and Images

You can import graphs from Excel spreadsheets and place them as figures in the text. Please make sure that they have a caption explaining their content and that you discuss the material in the text.

Graphic images (“line art”) can also be imported into word documents. Make sure that you only include material that is essential. For example, a map of a country to show the location of major cities is unnecessary, but a detailed map showing the location of something specific in your argument may be highly relevant. Be careful to include source references to all images that other people have produced.

If you need to include other illustrations, e.g. photographs, reproductions of paintings, or facsimile prints of manuscripts, you are encouraged to consider the technical approach carefully. Software allows you to “import” such images into your document and will enable you to print them. If you do this, you will need to use image editing software (e.g. Photoshop or the Gimp) to crop and resize the images and save them in an appropriate resolution for the printer you intend to use *before* you “import” them. This procedure has two negative aspects: (a) your file size increases and your document becomes inherently less stable; (b) your text and illustrations will be printed on the same printer, which is *either* slow, wasteful and expensive—you will be printing large numbers of text pages on a sophisticated colour printer—or compromise the quality of the images in the paper output. My solution to this is to process such images with image editing software and print them separately on high-quality paper using dedicated photo-printers and insert them manually. This low-tech solution ensures a high professional quality of images.

For electronic distribution, you can insert the illustrations in the word processor document and create a pdf file from that document. Images in pdf documents tend to be very clear on the screen.

Never include pictures as vignettes, decoration etc.

3.6 Footnotes and Endnotes

MS Word allows entering footnotes or endnotes in any document. If your referencing is based on the author-year (Harvard) system, you should not use foot- or endnotes for references.

Think of footnotes as a place to raise marginal issues or to indicate points that you do not wish to discuss in the main text. If you follow the good motto of “include what needs to be there and exclude what should not be there,” you may find that you can dramatically reduce the number of footnotes (or endnotes).

It is a misconception that the use of many footnotes signifies great scholarship. Well written and rounded scholarly publications (using the author-date system) rarely use footnotes.

In MS Windows, use *Insert* → *Reference* and choose footnote to insert a footnote or an endnote. MS Word automatically sets the footnote and endnote font size smaller (10 pt) than the default “normal” text font size (12 pt); this is how it normally should be. Please note that the footnote size is not set relative to “normal”, so if you change the “normal” text font size, you must also change the foot/end note font size (MS Word menu: *Format* → *Style* → select *Footnote Text* → *Modify* → *Format - Font*). Make sure always to choose the same font face as the “normal,” and a font size two steps smaller than “normal.”

The line spacing in foot/end-notes should always be 1.

4 Text Layout and Fonts

The layout of a thesis or dissertation should always follow the requirement of your university. There is a general idea that a thesis should be publishable, *but is not as yet published*. It should therefore, in the view of some and according to the rules of others, be presented as a manuscript, not as a professionally printed book.

Accordingly, in paragraph text, either use a serif font like Times New Roman, Garamond or Old Bookman or a fixed width font like Courier. For an overview, see Table 1. Fonts like Courier are considered to represent a *manuscript* typed on a mechanical typewriter and are still required by some universities (but not by Leeds).

It is normally easier to read material printed in good serif fonts like Times New Roman. Never use sans-serif fonts like Arial for the paragraph (or “normal”) text of theses, assignments or dissertations. Sans-serif fonts are ideal for the computer screen, and in paper print should only be used for chapter and section headings, and, where appropriate, captions, and data in tables. There are, in principle, three

TABLE 1: COMPARING FONT FAMILIES, SHAPES AND STYLES

	Serif	Sans Serif	Fixed Fonts	MS Word
Typical font	Times Roman	Arial	Courier	
Regular	Sample	Sample	Sample	Available
Slanted	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	Not Available
Italic	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	Available
Small caps	SAMPLE	SAMPLE	SAMPLE	Available
Bold	Sample	Sample	Sample	Available
Bold slanted	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	Not Available
Bold italic	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	<i>Sample*</i>	Available

Note: *In principle, there is no separate italic version of sans serif, fixed fonts or boldface, but it has become common usage to refer to their slanted versions as “italics.” This table follows this usage.

scenarios for correct use of font, the (a) print style, (b) typewriter style, and (c) the strict typewriter style. The first takes advantage of the main features of modern, computer based word processing, the second reflects the idea that a manuscript should be in the style of a typewriter, but includes the features available in electric IBM typewriters of the 1970s, and the third emphasises that the style should be exactly as in the use of mechanical typewriters. See Table 2 for an overview.

The text size should normally be 12 point (or 11.5 point). The size of footnote text is normally automatically set smaller by Word.

The line spacing should normally be 1.5, except where you use Courier, in which case it should be 2. This line spacing, combined with the standard A4-setting of the margins (and the left alignment of the text), indicate that the result is a “manuscript” rather than a professionally typeset book.

For various levels of headings, Word automatically sets a format, in most cases a sans-serif font like “Arial.” You may use “Heading 1” for the chapter title, “Heading 2” for the highest level of sections etc.

The font-style can be regular, *italics*, *slanted*, SMALLCAPS or **boldface**. Microsoft Word provides regular, italics, boldface and smallcaps. Always use regular for text. Use italics sparingly for emphasis, and when you name book and journal titles. Use smallcaps in figure and table captions, and generally avoid using boldface,⁴ except for head words in description lists. Normally, you should never use strikethrough in your thesis, assignments or dissertation; you should only use underline if you are formally required to deliver your work in strict typewriter style (see Table 2), where underline is used to replace italics. The only place where underline normally may be used is in URLs. However, “<http://www.leeds.ac.uk>” (i.e. the use of Courier or a similar fixed font) seems an appropriate and desirable alternative to underline.

Please remember that serif fonts in regular style are easy to read on paper. Sans-serif fonts are better on computer screens; the choice of font is a matter of context and readability.

Always make sure that you include page numbers on all pages, normally centre top or centre bottom. If you use header or footer, you may include your name and/or the title of the work and the page number in the right corner.

The text must always be paginated in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4 etc.). If the front matter uses roman numerals, the first page of the text must begin with page 1 in Arabic numerals.

The standard margin settings in Word are good, do not change them. The paper normally used in the UK is A4; please remember that the common paper size in the USA (11 inch) is slightly broader and shorter than A4 and that you may need to reset printer settings to get the correct result if you cooperate

⁴You will no doubt notice that I have used boldface in this document to make do and don’t exhortations. This will surely alert you to how awful boldface looks in most contexts.

TABLE 2: CORRECT USE OF FONTS

	Print Style	Typewriter style	Strict typewriter
Heading titles	Title	Title	Title
Text	Text	Text	Text
—book and journal titles	<i>Book title</i>	<i>Book title</i>	<u>Book title</u>
—emphasis	<i>emphasis</i>	<i>emphasis</i>	<u>emphasis</u>
Captions	TEXT	TEXT	TEXT
Footnotes	Footnote Text	Footnote Text	Footnote Text
—book and journal titles	<i>Book title</i>	<i>Book title</i>	<u>Book title</u>
—emphasis	<i>emphasis</i>	<i>emphasis</i>	<u>emphasis</u>

with somebody in the States.

5 Summing Up

Writing your thesis, assignments or dissertation, you must make sure that the presentation is the best possible. Use the outline and heading styles of Microsoft Word to help you structure your work. Use the proper lay-out features available.

THE TEXT FORMATTING EXERCISE

You are provided with a text (in Latin) from <http://www.personal.leeds.ac.uk/~chifc/styletxt.txt>. You have to treat the text arbitrarily. Do not attempt to understand it, and if you do, please ignore it. It is chosen simply as raw material for a formatting exercise!

You are required to edit this text in the following ways:

1. Make sure that all text is properly structured in paragraphs and consistently aligned.
2. Add title, and divide into sections and subsections, using appropriate document outline features of your word processing software
3. Add a table of contents at an appropriate place
4. Create a variety of lists in the texts
5. Create one or more tables
6. Create footnotes or endnotes
7. Make sure the text is properly paginated

Important hints

Cleaning up Paragraphs and Lines

You will soon notice that the text is *not* properly divided in paragraphs. In fact each line is a paragraph as defined above (each line ends with one hit on the return button, i.e. a “hard line shift”). What appears to be “paragraphs” at the first glance, in reality, are groups of paragraphs separated from other groups of paragraphs with one additional “hard line shift.”

You can see this in the following way: In MS Word, you activate ¶ from the menu bar, which allows you to show the “paragraph marks” (¶) and “empty spaces” (·) in the text, which are normally “hidden.”

You must make sure that you turn the text into proper paragraphs. You do that with the help of the “search and replace” function.

The strategy is to replace each single ¶ with an · and each double ¶ with a single ¶—in this way each real paragraph will be correct. To avoid that each and every double ¶ is changed to ·, you have first to change each double ¶ to a dummy. I normally use \$\$\$\$ as that sequence of characters is virtually non-existent in any natural text. Then you change each single ¶ into an ·, and subsequently you change \$\$\$\$ into a single ¶.

To this end, do as follows:

Enter MS Word “find and replace.” Click on “more” and then on “special.” Choose the “paragraph mark” from the menu so that it is entered in the “Find What” field in the form of ^p. Repeat this so that there are two paragraph marks in the field. Then enter \$\$\$\$ into the “Replace With” field. Now press “Replace All.” Next, remove one ^p from the “Find What” field and replace the \$\$\$\$ in the “Replace With” field with an empty space (hit the space bar; nothing is visible in the field), and press “Replace All.” I leave to you to figure out how to replace \$\$\$\$ in the text with ¶.

Page Breaks and Pagination

You will wish to have the title, author name, etc. on the first page, and the contents list on the second page.

Please make sure *never* to use “hard line shifts” to get to the next page. After the last word on the title page and after the contents list on the first page, insert a “manual page break” (using CTRL+RETURN or even better, MS Word menu: Insert → Break → Page Break).

In order to ensure that the page number is omitted on the title page, that pagination in the front matter is in Roman numerals and thereafter in Arabic numerals, please insert a “section break” after the front matter. You should not insert simple “page breaks” but “section breaks” of the type “Odd Page,” see MS Word menu: Insert → Break → Odd Page. This ensures that the preface or title page begins on a right hand side. An empty page ii will automatically be inserted after the title page.

For each “section” you can set page numbers (MS Word menu: Insert → Page Numbers). For the title page disable “Show number on first page.” For the front matter, choose “format” and change “number format” to i, ii, iii. For the main text, set number format to 1, 2, 3. Please note that the pagination of all chapters and sections in the main text should be continuous.

Setting the Style(s)

The most successful and competent use of MS Word’s style facility is to make sure that the settings in Format → Style are correctly set.

Typically, there will by default be styles for “normal” text, a number of “heading” levels, footnote text, and footnote reference. You may use these.

You are advised *never* to make changes by highlighting this or that in the text and apply new fonts and font sizes to it. What you should do, is to go into the Style menu and change the global settings according to your requirements. You may wish to create, for example, a new style for the bibliographical list. If you want to change the “normal” text style, you should do it in the style menu rather than manually section for section.

Please experiment with this.

Good luck!