

Writing your Dissertation

There are a number of ways to structure a dissertation. However, there are no clear and absolute rules. Therefore, the final structure of your document depends on your preferences, the data you are using and how you want to explain your thesis (argument). Consequently, it is difficult to offer a 'generic' structure that everyone should follow. Saying that, there are certain things that all dissertations need to cover, and therefore your task is to find a structure that enables you to ensure you construct a dissertation with the following included:

1. An initial brief summary or overview of the argument you are making, including detail of the topic being approached, theoretical framework and methodology used and the community you have learned from.
2. A review of the relevant disciplinary body of literature.
3. A thorough explanation of your methodology, including your place (how your assumptions, culture, etc has shaped the argument) in the creation of the document.
4. An argument that uses participants' voices to support the points you are making.
5. A final discussion that draws all of the above together.

You do NOT need to construct a document that follows the sequence as it is written above. Obviously, the final document must begin with an abstract and introduction and then end with a conclusion, but the rest of the information can be structured as you see fit. However, typically a methodology section comes before one's argument. Some feel it is better to review the literature in their method section. Others weave a lit review throughout their argument.

Things to Remember:

- We are looking to see if you are able to use anthropological methodologies successfully. Your document should show us that you understand the methods used by the discipline. It should also show that you are aware of the methods' flaws, controversies, issues (e.g.: ethical concerns), solutions etc.
- Be honest – show where things have 'gone wrong', where you have struggled and the solutions you have reached (and why). Don't hide – be present in the text. Be the researcher!
- REFERENCE everything.

If you are struggling to organise your dissertation, read the example dissertations uploaded into this section for inspiration. If that doesn't help, see your supervisor.