

Thesis planner

6 chapter structure

Feel free to adapt this plan to suit your own needs

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Topic or title

The information given here on writing an introduction is by way of example only. This represents a very common structure in academic writing, however, considerable variation exists on any given structure. |

**Chapter 1
Introduction**

1.1 Background

Sequence chosen according to your argument (some aspects may not be relevant)

Generalisations

Informed statements

Review of research

1.2 Issue

Only one main focus on the issue is needed:

- counter argument
- indicating a gap
- general inquiry

-following a research tradition

Aim of research

1.3

Aims/structure

Hypothesis & outcome (if needed)

Structure of work

←Add notes of
←content in
←final column

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**According to Hart (1998:27)
literature review works towards:**

- a) distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done;
- b) discovering important variables relevant to the topic;
- c) synthesizing and gaining a new perspective;
- d) identifying relationships between ideas and practice;
- e) establishing the context of the topic or problem;
- f) rationalizing the significance of the problem;
- g) enhancing and acquiring the subject vocabulary;
- h) understanding the structure of the subject;
- i) relating ideas and theories to applications;
- j) identifying the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used;
- k) placing the research in a historical context to show familiarity with state of the art developments.

These points are entirely optional and their presence and sequence in your work depends on your aims in relation to the main issue.

**Chapter 2
Literature review**

add extra sections
as required

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This is a difficult section to generalise on as the structure of a methodology chapter will vary according to the methods that are used.

One way of looking at it in a specific research methodology perspective (a more quantitative approach) is:

- a) Overview of research: connect this back to the issues raised in the introduction and use it as a continuation, or grounding, of the need for this work that was identified through the literature review.
- b) Sample: what is the research situation and who are the people or what is the thing/phenomenon being observed?
- c) Restrictions: what is the scope of the study and are there any particular limitations that need to be discussed? e.g. things that readers may be expecting in your work, but which will not be covered.
- d) Sampling technique: how will you obtain the data? This needs a descriptive account and will be very methodological in focus (not to be confused with point (f) below).
- e) Materials: what instruments, survey devices, etc. are being used?
- f) Procedure: how did you actually go about conducting the research? This is the actual account of your actions as opposed to the theoretical sampling technique (d) of the methodology itself.
- g) Statistical treatment: how will you be able to quantify this data?

You may be including a significant amount of diagrams and tables in this section, so be careful to label and cross reference all figures within your work.

(Based on Weissberg & Buker, 1990: 91-92)

**Chapter 3
Methodology**

add extra sections
as required

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The results section, if used in quantitative research, may be largely data driven as a consequence of the organisation and treatment of the methodology. This is often the section with the smallest overall word count as it will be directly cross referenced with the previous chapter.

What is specifically needed here is:

- a) **Description and location of main results.** i.e. are they included in diagrams or tables? If so which ones (cross reference figure numbers)? Don't forget to describe all results in writing. Figures should not be left to speak for themselves and they will need to be summarised in words.
- b) **Most important findings.** What is the significance of these findings? Give an indication of the implications that will be discussed in detail in the discussion section (chapter 5).

(Based on Weissberg & Buker, 1990: 137)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Chapters 3 and 4 form the core of the methodology and experimentation within a piece of research and they should not be attempted without prior discussion and approval from a supervisor.

In some cases, in descriptive or qualitative research, method and results need to be treated together. Again discuss these issues well in advance of your writing deadlines.

**Chapter 4
Results**

add extra sections
as required

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Swales (1990: 172-173) provides a review of a number of different views on **discussion sections**. The most common moves included in discussion section are listed here:

1. **Background information:** the writer provides a statement or information related to the central problem (intro, move 2) and/or aims (intro, move 3). This essentially repeats information, but serves to re-focus the reader's attention on the main problem.
2. **Statement of results:** the reader's attention has been re-focused here as a preview to the results obtained from the *method/results* section. This represents the real beginning of the new information presented in the discussion section.
3. **(Un)expected outcome:** the writer often comments on whether the results were expected or unexpected.
4. **Reference to previous research:** at this point the current work is once again reviewed in the context of previous writers to provide a basis for the new discussion.
5. **Explanation:** this is more common when the writer is reporting on unexpected results or results that deviate somewhat from findings anticipated from the introductory moves of *raising a question* and *continuing a tradition*.
6. **Exemplification:** if an explanation is provided, examples are often provided.
7. **Deduction and Hypothesis:** if the results can be generalized in a theoretical way they are discussed as part of a deduction or hypothesis. This is more common where concrete evidence is available.
8. **Recommendations:** if further research into any key issues is required, the writer makes reference to those issues here. This also serves to excuse any limitations within the current discussion.

As always, these moves should be organised according to the needs of your own argument.

Chapter 5 Discussion

add extra sections
as required

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