KEY INSIGHTS TO ASSIST HDR CANDIDATES

Compiled from various studies and websites

Motivation

You can apply the following recommendations to enhance your motivation and concentration.

Recommendation	When to implement
Your motivation at work tends to be restored, at least slightly, if you decide to work while standing	When uninspired
After you stare at the horizon or a picture of the horizon for a few minutes, you feel more inspired	When uninspired
If the contents of your workspace are arranged as orderly and symmetrically as possible, you are more likely to work diligently and to eat healthy food	When distracted
You are more likely to achieve some goal if you first consider the precise time, location, and setting in which you will initiate this goal.	When setting goals
You are more likely to more likely to achieve a goal if, for several minutes, you consider why this goal is important rather than only how to complete this goal.	When setting goals
You can resist temptations better, such as eating sweets or surfing the web, if you tell yourself you might yield to this temptation another day	When tempted to be irresponsible
After you expose yourself to nature, such as a video of a rainforest or a walk in the park, your concentration is more likely be restored.	When distracted
After you first attend an unfamiliar event—something different to anything you have experienced before—you can more readily change other facets of your life sustainably	When feeling stagnant
If you complete three hard tasks each morning for about 15 minutes—such as read rapidly, stretch, and complete an errand—you can maintain more energy across the day.	When feeling depleted

Establishing relationships with other individuals

Recommendation	When to implement
In meetings or discussions, rotate your seat so that your left shoulder is closer to the other person than is your right shoulder. In this position, you can more readily intuit the feelings or intentions of the other person.	To understand other people better
When attempting to develop trusting relationships, arrange a plate of food to share—such as chips or appetizers. People are more trusting in these circumstances.	To foster trust

While communicating with someone, indicate their feelings are understandable and show you adopted their perspective. You might say "I can really understand why you might feel that way" or "That does sound really hard"	To foster trust
Refer to your feelings or hunches. You might say "I feel that…" or "My hunch is that…". If you refer to your emotions or hunches, other people are more sensitive to your feelings. They perceive you as a fellow human being and not as a stranger.	To foster trust
When communicating to someone you know—but someone who seems quite wary rather than trusting—ask this person "How was your day" during a conversation. Then, of course, listen genuinely to their answers. People who are wary, rather than trusting, can feel somewhat threatened or uncomfortable in response to compliments or other comments that are intended as supportive. They perceive these comments as manipulative. But, for some reason, the simple question "How was your day" does not elicit these feelings of threat and instead tends to foster trust.	To foster trust

Literature reviews

Because almost every researcher needs to write a literature review, you might assume that scholars have developed a comprehensive set of guidelines on how to complete a literature review. But actually, every researcher and research candidate utilise a unique approach. Nevertheless, here are some guidelines that you could help you develop a cohesive and compelling literature review. These guidelines revolve around traditional literature reviews—rather than more systematic literature reviews.

Recommendation	When to implement
• Whenever you read your articles, you should obviously record key insights that you might want to include in your thesis later. • Insights might include a finding like "carrots improve intelligence", an argument like "carrots increase the number of brain cells and thus improve intelligence", or a methodological issue like "saturation is hard to establish". • Every week or so, you should sort these insights into clusters. • Each cluster should comprise insights that overlap with each other in some way—such as insights that explain why carrots improve intelligence. • Then, every few weeks, you should label these clusters and then arrange these labels in a logical order.	If unsure how to plan your literature review

• In addition, for each cluster, you should attempt to arrange the insights in a logical order. • Perhaps the insights could be ordered chronologically or in some other arrangement.	
• To uncover a comprehensive array of insights, you should develop a catalogue of keywords that you could use in literature searches. • As you read, you should gradually update and extend this catalogue of keywords. • You should then record in which databases you searched each keyword—including the date. • To extend your knowledge, you might begin your search in sources that are simple to understand—such as textbooks or websites that summarise the latest advances, like Science Daily. • Then, you should skim the top journals in your field • Next, you should enter your search term into relevant databases. These databases may be specific to your field, such as PsycINFO in psychology—or broad, such as Google Scholar.	If unsure how to collate the relevant literature methodically
• These searches should then generate an extensive list of publications. To decide which publications to read, first skim the titles. • Read at least one in five of the abstracts—to expose yourself to unfamiliar perspectives. • Then read at least one in five of the papers that correspond to these chosen abstracts. • You can also organize alerts—in which you receive emails whenever a database receives a publication that matches specific criteria, such as papers about carrots and intelligence.	If unsure which possible publications to read
• You should read both scholarly publications as well as other sources of information. • Most of your citations—that is, the articles or books in your reference list—should be scholarly journals or books. • But you can still read other sources of information, such as Wikipedia. • Indeed, sometimes you can even cite these other sources of information, such as theses, conference papers, newspapers, podcasts, reports, and webpages. • • Admittedly, these other sources, sometimes called the grey literature, are not peer-reviewed • That is, they are not evaluated carefully by other scholars. • Therefore, the methods are more likely to be flawed, the limitations are not as likely to be acknowledged, and conflicts of interests are more likely to have skewed the conclusions • • But, grey literature can be useful as well for several reasons	When extending your knowledge

- First, some grey literature, such as conference papers, are often more recent than scholarly literature.
- Conference papers are sometimes published soon after they are submitted. Scholarly journal articles are sometimes published one, two, or three years after they are submitted.
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- Second, grey literature is often harder to access.
- Therefore, other researchers may have overlooked some of the key insights of this literature.
- A literature review that utilises the grey literature, therefore, is likely to include more novel perspectives
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- Third, grey literature can include a greater range of studies—such as studies that did not generate non-significant results
- Fourth, the grey literature, especially industry reports, can help you really understand the industry, setting, or context better
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- To access the grey literature, you can utilise a range of websites.
- example, to uncover grey literature in Australia, use the database trove.nla.gov.au
- To uncover theses, use the database called ProQuest Dissertations, available from the library.

Recommendations about writing style

Recommendation	When to implement
For several reasons, try to avoid the word "it". First, this word is sometimes ambiguous; that is, the reader is often uncertain what or who "it" is. Second, this word often indicates the sentence could be shortened. For example, the phrase "it is noteworthy that…" can be omitted. • To avoid this word, you can sometimes replace "it" with a specific person, group, or object. For instance, "it is thought that" could be replaced with "researchers contend that".	To write more convincingly
In general, to avoid ambiguities, write a noun after the word "this". For example, "this shows" could be replaced with "this finding shows". You need specify what "this" or "these" refer to	To write more convincingly
Often, to avoid ambiguities, replace the word "those" with a specific noun. For example, "those who like to read" should be "people who like to read".	To write more convincingly

In general, to prevent ambiguities, avoid the word "one" to indicate a person. "One should read 10 books" could be "Adults should read 10 books"—or some other specific noun. Similarly, be careful with pronouns such as "we" and "our" unless the scope of these pronouns is unambiguous.	To write more convincingly
Ensure all pronouns, such as "they" or "it", are unambiguous. Specifically avoid the word "they" if the sentence comprises two plural nouns. For example, the sentence "the participants ate the cherries, and they later exploded", comprises two plural nouns: participants and objects. Hence, the reader cannot be certain whether the participants or cherries exploded.	To write more convincingly
In general, avoid the word "others" as in "Other agree". To prevent ambiguities, specify what "others" refers to, such as "other people" or "other methods".	To write more convincingly
Phrases like "in regard to", "in respect to", "in relation to", or "in terms of" are often unnecessary or vague. Sometimes they can be replaced with more specific words, one simple word—such as "on" or "about"— or omitted altogether, particularly if the sentence is slightly modified. For example, the sentence "He spoke to me in relation to my job" could be "He spoke to me about my job". Or the sentence "In terms of food, chocolate is my favourite" could be "Chocolate is my favourite food".	To write more convincingly
A sentence like "He visited Barnes and Noble and Dymocks" can be confusing; does this sentence refer to one, two, or three places. The phrase "as well as" can be helpful, such as "He visited Barnes and Noble as well as Dymocks"	To write more convincingly
The word "because" is usually better than synonyms such as "since", "as", "given that", "due to", and so forth. Some of these synonyms are ambiguous. For example, "since" can mean "after in time, as in "Since 1990, nobody has ever won twice." Likewise, "as" can mean "while", as in "They sang as they cooked". Other synonyms of because may be cumbersome.	To write more convincingly
Many verbs, such as "get", "give", "take", "make", and "done", are called polysemous: They connote many distinct meanings and, therefore, can be vague. Instead, replace these words with more precise alternatives—such as encourage, donate, adopt, construct, reach, conduct, and so forth. You could utilize a dictionary to identify better alternatives.	To write more convincingly
Avoid colloquial phrases, informal phrases, and metaphors—such as "at the end of the day"—but instead write as precisely as possible.	To write more convincingly

The problem is that some of these phrases are ambiguous. The meaning of other phrases changes rapidly over time and thus might be misconstrued in the future.	
To write as precisely as possible, you should generally replace the phrase "a number of" with more precise words like "many", "several, "ten", and so forth. Sometimes you can even omit this phrase altogether	To write more convincingly
To avoid ambiguities, do not use the word "lack" too often. This word can mean "scarcity of" or "none of". So, perhaps use words like "limited", "inadequate", "absence", "none", and so forth instead.	To write more convincingly
Phrases like "this method impacts their health" could be replaced with "this method damages their health". That is, you should, whenever possible, indicate whether the relationship was positive or negative; otherwise, the sentence is too vague. Often, the word "impact", for example, implies the sentence could be more specific.	To write more convincingly
If possible, insert the word "only" immediately before the term that needs to be modified; when inserted in the wrong spot, the sentence may be misconstrued. For example, "he ate only one biscuit" is correct. But "he only ate one biscuit" indicates he ate, rather than initiated another act, on a biscuit.	To write more convincingly
Specify the subject of sentences—the key individual, group, or agent— as explicitly as possible. Rather than write "This concept is known to be important", write "Researchers know this concept is important".	To write more convincingly
Whenever possible, omit redundant words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs—such as the phrase "a total of". When you review your work, delete as many words as you can.	To write more concisely
Sentences like "The participants sat at his or her table" are quite cumbersome. To avoid phrases like "his or her", "he or she", or "him or her", refer to people in plural form, such as "The participants sat at their table"	To write more concisely
The phrases "in order", "in an effort", or "in an attempt" are always redundant and, therefore, should usually be omitted. You should write as concisely as possible.	To write more concisely
The phrases "lead to" and "results in" often indicate the sentence could be shorter. For example, "this method leads to an increase in prices" could be reduced to "this method increases prices". Similarly, "this method results in an increase in prices" could be reduced to "this method increases prices".	To write more concisely
The phrases "results found that", "results showed that", and so forth are usually redundant. The rest of that sentence usually implies this phrase. For example, you could often replace "Results showed that carrots enhance mood" with "Carrots enhance mood".	To write more concisely

The phrase "aim to" can sometimes be omitted. Rather than "this study aims to examine this issue", you can write "this study examines this issue". Furthermore, the phrase "aim to" can	To write more concisely
The word "there" often indicates the sentence could be more concise or precise. For example, "There are researchers who claim that coffee is healthy" could be reduced to "Researchers claim that coffee is healthy". Or "There has been an increase in obesity levels" could be reduced to "Obesity levels have increased".	To write more concisely
Try to avoid unnecessary repetition—such as two sentences that are similar. To illustrate, the phrase "in order words" indicates that one sentence is too similar to another sentence. One sentence, if written clearly, should be sufficient	To write more concisely
Use the word "who" after humans and "that" after nonhumans. "The woman who yawned looked tired. But the dog that yawned looked tired"	To write correctly and professionally
Use "that" to restrict the scope of your noun. For example, the sentence "The frogs that are green jump high" revolves only around a subset of frogs: green frogs. Use "which" to describe this noun in general. For example, the sentence "The frogs, which are green, jump high" indicates that all frogs are green.	To write correctly and professionally
Use "fewer" for number, such as fewer people, and "less" for amount, such as "less water". If you are able to count an object, use fewer rather than less	To write correctly and professionally
The phrase is "comprise" or "consist of" but not "comprise of". The sample comprises 10 people and does not comprise of 10 people	To write correctly and professionally
Refrain from "prove", "proof", "fact", or other definite words, because virtually all observations and discoveries are contestable. Therefore, phrases like "this method has proven to be effective" is misleading, because the proof is never definite.	To write correctly and professionally
Sometimes, you can omit "therefore", "thus", or related words. In particular, do not use these words if they precede a phrase that does not necessarily follow from the previous phase. For example, in the sentence "cats are shy and therefore dogs are confident" is unsuitable; the second phrase about dogs does not necessarily follow from the first phrase.	To write correctly and professionally
Do not use plural pronouns, like "they", to represent singular nouns, like "one person". You should not write "A child should be told they are special". To avoid this problem, you should often use plural nouns too—such as "Children should be told they are special".	To write correctly and professionally
In general, commas should be used for three purposes. First, commas separate items in a list, such as "cats, dogs, and birds" or "the big, fat, grey cat"	To punctuate correctly

Second, commas surround phrases that could be omitted or shifted to another location in the sentence or to another sentence, such as "Australia, which is a large nation, is near New Zealand". For the same reason, commas surround conditional clauses—that is, a phrase that explains when something else is true and often begins with words like when, at, during, after, before, by, and if. An example is "The lecturer, after seeing his reflection, fainted". Finally, commas separate independent clauses—that is, parts that could be complete sentences by themselves. An example is "The dog barked loudly, and the cat scampered away".	
The phrase after a semi-colon should always be an independent clause; that is, this phrase could be a complete sentence by itself. An example is "The dog barked loudly; the cat scampered away". Use commas instead of semi-colons to separate items in a list—unless the items themselves contain commas. Typically, a semi-colon should precede the word "however"—especially if the words that follow the term could be a whole sentence—unless this term begins a sentence.	To punctuate correctly
Usually, include a colon before clarifying an unfinished claim or presenting a list: This sentence illustrates the point. Omit these colons, unless the flow of this sentence suddenly breaks. For example, omit the colon in the sentence "The seven dwarves are: doc, grumpy, happy, sleepy, dopey, bashful, and sneezy".	To punctuate correctly
Avoid too many brackets. Anything important to write should be included in the text—and perhaps surrounded by commas or em dashes—like in this sentence. Em dashes are large dashes that are created from two hyphens and no spaces. Anything not important enough to include in the text should be omitted	To punctuate correctly
In scientific writing, avoid using quotation marks, except for actual quotes—in which case, page numbers are required. For example, do not use quotation marks to earmark approximate or informal terms, but instead use the most precise word. Include quotes only when the precise wording is vital; otherwise paraphrase, because too many quotes may be perceived as lazy.	To punctuate correctly
In scientific writing, instead of quotation marks, use italics to indicate words that are foreign or used in a different context to usual. You might, for example, write "Participants read the words *and* and *if*". The *and* is not used in the usual way and so italics are appropriate. Do not use italics to emphasize an argument; the words alone should be sufficient.	To punctuate correctly
Avoid the overuse of slashes. For example, write "People can eat, drink, or both here" instead of "People can eat and/or drink". The	To punctuate correctly

problem with slashes is they may be ambiguous—and can mean "and", "or", "a combination of", and so forth.	

Recommendations about writing structure

Recommendation	When to implement
Unless your writing is advanced, primarily write short sentences. Each sentence should present one very specific argument. The next sentence should extend this argument slightly and so forth. That is, your arguments should evolve very gradually.	To enhance the clarity of your writing
Often, people write sentences that are incomplete. Consider "The man slept. Whereas the woman worked". The second sentence is not complete because words like "whereas" or "although" indicate you want to compare two objects, such as man and woman, in the same sentence.	To enhance the clarity of your writing
To write even more cohesively, scan the topic sentences—the key sentence that outlines each paragraph—in isolation of the other sentences. That is, the topic sentences alone should be comprehendible and encompass the key arguments. Then, verify that all the other sentences revolve around these topic sentence.	To enhance the clarity of your writing
Paragraphs should comprise between 2 and 8 sentences—and usually between 3 and 6 sentences. Paragraphs with only one or even two sentences do not explore the argument enough. Paragraphs with too many sentences might conflate several distinct arguments.	To enhance the clarity of your writing

Recommendations about particular sections of your thesis

Recommendation	When to implement
For most studies, an abstract should include one or two sentences on each of the following issues: the issue you want to solve; the aim of this study; the method; the key results; and the main conclusions or implications	When writing the abstract
When describing the most relevant studies in the literature review, you should usually outline the aim, outline the method—to a sufficient detail so the reader understands the study—and then finally the results. Usually, about 3 to 5 sentences is sufficient, unless the study is complex. Often, you might dedicate a whole paragraph, or almost one paragraph, to a key study.	When writing the literature review
Always clarify or imply how your study is unique. You do not merely want to replicate another study. You need to show how your study diverges from previous work. For example, does your study control variables or examine mediators that past studies have overlooked;	When writing about the aims or purpose of your thesis

otherwise, the reader may not be certain how your study extends previous work. And then, more importantly, highlight with this unique feature of this study is important. That is, how or why could this unique feature affect the results? What can we learn from this unique feature?	
Strictly speaking, hypotheses should be based on theories and not findings. Indeed, a hypothesis is a prediction that is derived from a theory or explanation—and is designed to assess that theory or explanation only. Hypotheses are not actually personal expectations.	When writing about the aims or purpose of your thesis
Whenever you pose hypotheses, you need to specify the direction. Which group is higher or is the relationship positive or negative?	When writing about the aims or purpose of your thesis

Recommendations about how to seek feedback from supervisors

Recommendation	When to implement
Your supervisors are likely to be very busy and may not read your drafts as promptly as you would like—such as a draft of your research proposal, a paper, or a chapter. To overcome this problem, rather than send your supervisor a huge document, such as the draft of a proposal, you could instead first write and then email the main sections of this document, such as 10 or so bullet points, similar to • introduction about the importance of critical thinking, • studies that verify the importance of critical thinking, • theories on how critical thinking evolves, • studies that support each theory • … In this email, you might write "I just want to check whether you feel I have covered the main topics and arranged these topics in the right order". Once approved, you could write and email a more specific plan that comprises additional details about each bullet point, similar to • importance of critical thinking to academia • importance of critical thinking to work • importance of critical thinking to family life • importance of critical thinking at different ages. • … Finally, before sending an entire draft, merely write a few pages as effectively as you can. You might then email your supervisor a message like "I was hoping to receive some feedback on just a few	When you want supervisors to read your drafts

pages first—so you can recommend changes to my writing style before I write the rest of this draft".	

Examinations

Recommendation	When to implement
During your candidature, the most important decision revolves around who should examine your thesis. The examiners cannot be friends, family, or colleagues. But they be people you have met briefly, either in person or online. So, to locate suitable examiners, one strategy is to send a couple of emails, with relevant questions, to academics in your field. Academics who respond eagerly and swiftly might be suitable examiners. Examples of questions you might ask are • I am planning to use the method you utilized in one of your papers. Did you experience any complications with this method? • I am planning to conduct research that is similar to your work on… Are you aware of anyone else who is exploring similar questions? • I thought I would email you to let you know I am attempting to extend some of your work on… Let me know if you might be interested in the results.	When deciding on suitable examiners
Usually, HDR candidates will offer some advice to their supervisors on suitable examiners. The most reasonable examiners tend to demonstrate these characteristics: • They have examined many theses at the same level before and, therefore, are not unfairly critical. • They have supervised many theses at the same level before and, thus, appreciate the challenges of HDR. • Their appointment level—such as Associate Professor or Professor—has not increased rapidly in recent years, implying they are not unduly competitive or ruthless. • They have utilized the methodologies that were used in the thesis. • They have published in diverse fields or utilized diverse methodologies and, therefore, appreciate diverse perspectives. • They manage other inexperienced researchers and, hence, may helpful contacts in the future.	When deciding on suitable examiners