



Thesis writing

Body chapters



UNIVERSITY
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PURPOSE

Where a thesis is structured using a theoretical rather than a scientific approach (a “type 2” structure*), it will typically have several “body chapters”. These chapters do not have a pre-determined, logical structure to follow: the organising logic must be imposed on the topics that constitute the thesis. Mapping that structure in the early stages of writing is very important and helps the writer to see the thesis taking shape while the logical structure of the finished thesis is crucial if the thesis is to pass through the examination process successfully.

Example: thesis outline (type 2)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Subjects and subjectivities

each chapter has an introduction and conclusion, and is clearly linked to other chapters

Chapter 3: The historical context: mapping the discourses & the practices of physical education

titles of body chapters indicate both their topic and role in the thesis, and signal key concepts used and argued

Chapter 4: The cultural context: images of the body

Chapter 5: Discursive biographies: students' and teachers' subjectivities

each chapter is divided into sections and subsections.

Chapter 6: The physical education lesson as genre

the number of body chapters depends on the topic and argument

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Structure also needs to be imposed on the presentation of information within chapters. The main way this is achieved is by the division of information into sections and subsections in a way that allows readers to see the relationships between different topics and subtopics. Because there is an organisational hierarchy here or a nesting of bits of information inside other bits of information, some kind of numbering system is needed to make the hierarchy apparent to the reader. Notice how the table of contents excerpt below allows readers to see how bits of information inside the chapter relate to other bits of information. Also notice how the titles of chapter, sections and subsections begin the process of presenting the argument to the reader. Seeing a chapter outlined in this way gives the reader a ‘big picture’ understanding of what concepts the chapter is dealing with and what arguments are being presented.



ACADEMIC LITERACY

Learning, Teaching & Curriculum – Learning Development

Chapter 3 The historical context: mapping the discourses and the practices of physical education

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The British experience

3.2.1 Boys' physical education drill and games

3.2.2 The female tradition in physical tradition

3.3 The Australian experience

3.3.1 Drill and games – 1880 – 1930s

3.3.2 The female tradition in NSW to 1960

3.3.3 The male tradition in NSW to 1960

3.4 The masculine tradition as the tradition with sports and games as its focus

3.5 State of the art: the 1980/5 Syllabus in New South Wales

3.6 Conclusion: Physical education, sport and social control

Structure within the sections and subsections of the thesis is also important for providing the reader/examiner with an easy-to-read thesis. Some of these issues involve the structure of paragraphs, the use of cohesive devices to ensure that your sections 'hang together' well and the creation of logical flow within and between paragraphs.

*"Type 1" is used in the sciences and for other experimental research and follows a structure such as Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion.

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