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PhD Thesis/Dissertation Summaries or Monographs

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OptiFor (Optimization in Forestry): A simulation-optimization system for forest and natural resources management. OptiFor is an idea to link ecological simulation and optimization knowledge for understanding complex dynamic ecosystems.

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Title page

Give this much thought: not a long title, but inclusive of all results, and usually not a full sentence with a temporal verb. Rather than "X improves," say "improvement with X," or "effect of X in improving Y." For the big day, use "12 noon," not "12 o'clock noon." (One candidate even substitute, for "public" -- "pubic examination"!)

Table of contents and list of studies

Again, in Contents, avoid full sentences, temporal verbs, and most articles (except "the only/the first"). Avoid five-place ("3.1.2.5.1") numbering; even four looks silly to some non-natives! Finally, be sure that you or your smart program makes all subtitles in the Table of Contents and in the text itself agree.

Refer to attached articles -- you must receive permission to reprint these -- as "Study I or Study IV," capitalized, because "study is a common word. Or use "(I)" or "(IV)." Calling them "papers," "articles," or "sections" is unusual and thus confusing. The separate studies comprise and present your entire research project. Do not, however, capitalize "study" in a general context; write "For this study, we ..." "All the studies showed"

Abbreviations

Check and double-check that every abbreviated term in the text -- except ones like pH or USA -- appears at its first use written out in full, with the abbreviation in parentheses: "Middle High German (MHG)," avoiding periods inside abbreviations ("UN / USA / USSR"). Perhaps define abbreviations again at the start of each long section.

Each abbreviation and meaning must exactly match the same items in your abbreviations list (with no definitions in full sentences). This practice applies now also for many journals, which may request that an abbreviations list follow the abstract.

Tables and figures

Consider a flow-chart for subjects, methods, or results. These transfer complex information rapidly and easily and save hundreds of words.

Refer readers to tables and figures already in your attached published studies ("See

Study III, Table 6, p. 88"). A page number will truly clarify what you are doing. This procedure saves effort, word, and costs.

Reproducing any tables or figures in full or in part is repetitious and also requires permission from the journal separate from the permission merely to attach the full articles to the end of the dissertation summary. Permission must then be stated exactly as required on table or figure: "Reproduced by permission of the Lancet."

Try to create new tables/figures synthesizing or consolidating data from more than one study. Opponents praise these!

Explain all abbreviations, because each table and figure here, as in your articles, must stand alone, independent of the text. Use no article if a number follows and no period/full stop after the number except in the legend:

Not "The Table 3. shows," but "Table 3 shows"

Literature section

This is the most difficult part to write. Never plagiarize lines from others' even from your own published articles. You no longer own your words; the words (paraphrases) or quotation marks. Notice my practice to avoid plagiarism in the sections on titles and on discussion-writing.

Avoid "e.g." in citations, and rarely use "(See Brown 2015)." Saying "For a review, see Brown 2015)" is fine.

Avoid repeating an identical citation several times with no intervening citations, even if it is given only as "3" or "(3)" or as superscript³. Use pronouns thus:

"Brown et al. (1998) found X. They continued with Z. In that study, A is B and their findings also showed Y is Z, although Smith (2000) saw no Y."

The difference between writing "Brown (2015) suggests that X is Y" or "X is Y (Brown 2015)" is subtle. Using the second most vital position in a sentence for a name is wasteful, because you could use it for an important word. If, however, you agree closely with Brown, you know Brown personally, or if she is your professor or reviewer, this can be polite -- even wise. Sentence-final parenthetical citations save words and do not affect end-focus.

Journal editors now seem to favor "... and colleagues" or "and co-workers" rather than "et al." for authors' names given outside of parentheses.

As to font, italics ("*et al.*") are costly and difficult to use consistently.

For example, if you use any italics, you must use italic for all Latin terms and foreign words ("i.e. / e.g. / *laissez-faire*"). Consistency is vital ("Dr. Hall/Doctor Lin, 5% / 8% / 3%) and see Appendix II.

Check and recheck all references. Errors here will (publicly) irritate opponents! Each reference that you mention must be in the list, and your opponent will expect you to have read them all. Opponents also expect to see some of their own articles cited, and they want you to know about all of their research work!

For "personal communication," get the permission of the communicator, and do not add this as an item in your reference list. The same is true is true for Refereces in articles.

Avoid repetition. End the introductory line ("The aims of this project / study / work are the following:") with enough words so that each aim listed contains only new information. Finding synonymous verbs ("to study / to investigate / to find out / to explore / to determine") makes you sound like a thesaurus.

Use blank spaces, numbers or black balls (●, "bullets") beside the aims, not --. We do not recognize these --, so always avoid them. Be sure that all aims are grammatically parallel, for instance all with infinitives or all with participles.

"The aim of this project was to study a ...

YES

"population to twins to determine their:

- length at birth
- weight at birth
- growth rate
- rate of growth"

NO

"... population of twins:

- to determine their length
- to establish their weight
- for ~~measuring their~~ growth rate
- to measure"

Methods and Results

Combine the studies' methods, contrast them, or just refer us to Methods and Results in the published studies ("see Methods, Study II, P. 81"), rather than cutting and pasting, if that means plagiarizing passages from each study. Paraphrasing methods is difficult. methods can be short in a summary.

Discussion

In a summary or monograph, you may start the discussion with background. you need not state the findings first, as in an article. Dod not repeat the Literature section. That will have been more general (called "Back to the Romans") than is the Discussion of

your own work. I stress, do not repeat results; discuss them. Not "Of the 33 presidents, 29 died in office," but "The most likely reason for the high / ninety percent / 90% mortality is stress." Remember that yours and others' theorizing takes present tense.