

Common problems with dissertation and thesis formats that prevent acceptance

	DO	DON'T
1	Make sure your title page is the current style.	Just copy a previous thesis/dissertation title page.
2	Capitalize the first letter of each major word (e.g., "New Science and Discovery of Things").	Capitalize every word in the title without consideration, use all caps, capitalize only the first word, or have lowercase only.
3	Have the correct date for your semester of graduation (Fall is December, Spring is May, Summer is August).	Have the date you defended, wrote the document, submitted the thesis/dissertation, etc.
4	Include only names for committee members.	Include "Dr." or "Prof." in the names of committee members.
5	Write an abstract that briefly summarizes the overall content of the thesis/dissertation and the conclusions drawn.	Have an introduction for an abstract.
6	Create a Table of Contents with all front page matter (including the TOC itself), chapters, etc.	Omit the TOC, abstract, list of figures, etc. from the TOC.
7	Place the List of Tables before the List of Figures	Put List of Figures before the List of Tables
8	Label TOC and front matter pages (abstract, TOC, list of figures, etc.) with lower case roman numerals (i,ii, iii, iv...) to separate them from chapter pages.	Label front matter pages with Arabic numbers (1,2,3...) or upper case roman numerals (I, II, III, IV...).
9	Check for any capitalization errors in the TOC.	Have capitalization different than within the thesis/dissertation.
10	List only the figure titles in the List of Figures (List can be single spaced).	Include legends from figures or footnotes.
11	Check that the page numbering is correct (continuously advancing integers) throughout.	Restart numbering pages with each chapter or ever skip numbers.
12	Have consistent subtitle formatting throughout the document, with each title level consistent within chapters and with other chapters' use.	Mix formatting for first level titles, second level titles, etc.
13	Always have headers or titles above and on the same page as the beginning of the text, table, etc. they introduce.	Allow a heading to awkwardly appear at the bottom of a page without text, table, etc. beneath. (If it does, move it to the next page at the top of the section in question.)
14	Number Figures (and Tables) consistently and sequentially (e.g., Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2, Figure 2.1, etc.).	Mix formats in different chapters or repeat numbers in different chapters.
15	Use "Figure X.Y" in the text.	Use only "Fig. X.Y" or switch between full word and abbreviation.
16	Make all text in Figures large enough (at least 1 mm tall) and with high enough resolution to read.	Have illegible text in figures.
17	Rearrange and enlarge entire figure panels to the extent possible to make hard-to-read text legible. Do this <u>early</u> – it will be much harder to fix at the last minute.	Make figure panels and labels tiny and hard-to-read.
18	Place all figures, graphs, tables, schemes, equations, etc., immediately (or as immediately as possible) below the paragraph in which they are first referred to or referenced. (If not referenced or described in the text, Figures may be grouped in an appendix.)	Place figures above the text that first describes or references them or have them pages after the text that describes them. Group figures, etc. at the end of a chapter.
19	Put table captions above the table and omit a period at the end.	Put table captions below or to the side of the table. Add a period to the end of the title.
20	Label every axis of all graphs.	Leave the axes unlabeled.

	DO	DON'T
21	Make your own figures and graphics.	Use screenshots of computer software or instrument readouts as figures unless they are absolutely necessary. They are hard to read and have low resolution.
22	Use the past tense to describe experimental results.	Switch between tenses or use present tense.
23	Use present tense for discussion of principles or general conclusions (or for describing what is in a table or figure).	Switch between tenses or use past tense inappropriately.
24	Use an Oxford comma in lists (e.g., a, b, c, or d) and to separate independent clauses.	Omit the Oxford comma (a, b, c or d) or have run-on sentences.
25	Hyphenate words correctly. If journals in your field do not use standard hyphenated words, please attach a list of words that are not hyphenated so they will be ignored.	Hyphenate compound words.
26	Number compounds/items with each one having its own number. If each chapter is a separate piece of work, compounds can be numbered as "chapter#.compound#" (i.e., compound 1 in the second chapter is 2.1).	Repeat compound numbers for different compounds in the thesis/dissertation.
27	Be consistent with units and their abbreviations ("s" for second, "min" for minute, "h" for hour, "d" for days are recommended. Specific abbreviations are not required as long as the use is consistent).	Mix abbreviations (e.g., hour, hr, hrs, and h).
28	Put spaces between numbers and units (e.g., 10 min, 50 ml, 25 nmoles).	Run numbers into units (e.g., 23°C).
29	Use a spell checker and grammar checker	Forget to correct grammatical and spelling errors.
30	Have in-text references point back to (i.e., cite) an entry in the bibliography (e.g., Williams reported this... (Williams et al., date) or (ref#)).	Only use names to cite references in bibliography.
31	Use "Bibliography" to title the cited reference section in document and in TOC. (Bibliography section can be single-spaced with a space between reference entries).	Use "References" to title the cited reference section in document and in TOC.
32	Use one format for references and be consistent. Format is optional and any format that is routinely used in your discipline is OK.	Mix formats or have a different format in each chapter.
33	List first five authors before using "et al."	List only the first author and then using "et al."
34	Write reference title in sentence case (capitalization).	Write reference title all lower case or ALL CAPS.
35	Include reference volume number and date (year).	Use a DOI number or URL in a cited reference unless this is the only method of accessing a recent paper.
36	Be consistent on the indicated reference pages (range [e.g., pp. 130-136] vs. first page only).	Let your citation manager put anything into your bibliography without double-checking the accuracy.
	RECOMMENDED/OPTIONAL	
37	Have a List of Abbreviations in the front matter pages.	
38	Chemistry: May have a separate bibliography for each chapter.	