

## How to write an essay or thesis

The following guide provides the most important facts about writing and correcting an essay or thesis in our department. Please adhere to these rules and make use of these tips.

### **1. Formal rules**

#### 1.1 Page layout

- Left and right margin: 2.5-3cm; top and bottom margin: 2-2.5cm
- Font style: Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri
- Font size in the body of text: 12 pt, 1.5 line pitch, justified
- Foreign words *in italics*

#### 1.2 Titles

- 14pt (subtitles 12pt), in bold

#### 1.3 Length

- 3000 words (BA), 5000 words (MA)
- Written work for a presentation (BA): 1500 words

#### 1.4 Front page

- Name of the University, name of the seminar, the lecturer and the student (with matriculation number and contact details), year, semester, and title of the work

#### 1.5 Structure and table of contents

- To structure the content we use the decimal system and arabic numerals (e.g. 1/1.1/1.2/2/2.1...). A thesis should not be structured into more than three main parts, written work for a presentation is normally structured into two parts.
- The table of contents presents the structure and lists the page numbers of individual sections. Page 1 begins with the introduction.

### **2. Content**

#### 2.1 Introduction

- The introduction contains a short explanation of the topic and the central problem being addressed.

It should also explain the research methods (data, literature, interpretation of the sources) and the structure of the text to follow.

#### 2.2 Main body

- The main section of the text should develop the argument logically and in accordance with the structure described in the introduction. It is important maintain a grasp on the central argument and to avoid tangents.
- Do not only repeat and quote the literature, but reflect on it and evaluate it.
- Remember to explain the most important terms relevant to your argument and featured in the literature.

#### 2.3. Conclusion

- The conclusion summarizes the main text and addresses an answer to the central problem or question described in the introduction, offers a critical evaluation, and proposes further questions and research possibilities.

### **3. How to cite literature**

All data which are used directly from other sources have to be identified. If not, you risk plagiarism. We use the American quotation style, which means that the source is written directly into the continuous text beyond the quotation: e.g. "...text..." (Geertz 1983:51-53).

#### 3.1 Indirect Quotation

- Indirect quotations, which refer to another author's argument without using its exact wording, are written without quotation marks.
- The source is written in the American quotation style at the end of the indirect quotation (year of publication: page). The full citation will be given in the bibliography.
- To avoid repeating in-text citations of frequently quoted literature, it is possible to use sentences such as "In the following text I will summarize the theory of Müller(1998:67-75)..."

#### 3.2 Direct Quotation

- Direct quotations are offset with quotation marks.
- If the quotation is longer than three lines, it should be indented away from the main text and reduced in size to 10pt font, 1.0 line pitch.
- Direct quotations should be used sparingly and only if they strengthen your argument or define central terms in the work of their authors. Otherwise, use your own wording to convey ideas.
- It is important to cite a source even when only one special term belonging to or used by another author is quoted.

#### 3.3 Further Quotation Rules

- Quotations have to be accurate word for word. Omissions have to be marked by (...). Inserted text is marked by [...]. Any added emphasis should be indicated in the bibliography e.g. (Hannerz 1980:26, emphasis by K.B.).
- Grammatical or spelling errors in the original are reproduced and are marked by (sic).

### **4. Footnotes**

- Footnotes are used for additional corrections, objections or commentaries.
- They are written at the end of each page (not on the end of the paper) and are structured by font size 12pt, 1.0 line pitch and left-justified.

### **5. Bibliography**

- The bibliography should only list the literature cited in the text.
- The bibliography should be uniformly formatted in font size 12pt, 1.0 line pitch, left justified and with hanging indent.
- Author(s), year and title are always at the beginning of each item in the bibliography. The main source--the title of a book, journal or edited volume--should be written in italics.

- The language of the bibliography depends on the language of the main text. In an English text, editors are identified with (ed.) while in a German text, they are identified with (Hg.) ("*herausgegeben*").
- The bibliography is organized alphabetically by author surnames.
- We recommended that you use a citation management program, e.g.  
Citavi: <http://www.fu-berlin.de/einrichtungen/bibliotheken/ze-ub/index.html>  
Endnote: [http://www.ub.fu-berlin.de/service\\_neu/literaturverwaltung/endnote/](http://www.ub.fu-berlin.de/service_neu/literaturverwaltung/endnote/)

## **6. Appendix**

The appendix contains additional material (maps, tables, pictures,...) too large for the main text.

## **7. Binding Declaration of Originality**

To affirm that the text is written by yourself and that every quotation of the work of another is properly cited and listed in the bibliography, you must append the following declaration to your thesis:

### **Eidesstattliche Erklärung**

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig ohne fremde Hilfe und nur mit den angegebenen Hilfsmitteln verfasst habe.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ort, Datum

\_\_\_\_\_  
Unterschrift

## **8. Plagiarism: FU Berlin Policy**

If any quotation or passage taken from another text is used without identification and citation, this is considered plagiarism. Academic staff are obligated to report such cases to the exam committee.