Generic Thesis Advice

The following is some advice from [**The Public Sentence**](http://www.thepublicsentence.com) team that may save you hours of work and even hundreds of dollars as you work on, and yes, submit, that thesis. This should be read in conjunction with the *Generic Thesis Style Sheet* and the *Generic Thesis Chapter Template*. So, let’s not muck about; here’s the advice.

#### First things

* Early in a big writing project it’s much easier to get things right rather than having to tidy it up later. So…
* Start your own style sheet and set up your own thesis template at the start of your writing (or now if you’ve already started). See the example documents mentioned above.

#### Using Microsoft Word

* If you are working on a long document (or chapters of a thesis) and you aren’t very familiar with Microsoft Word’s styles and headings and formatting functions, then please talk to us now—not down the track when you’ve done lots of work that has to be reformatted. When you know how to use formatting, Word is your best friend. But if you are manually formatting paragraphs and headings and line breaks then you are setting yourself up for difficulties when it comes time for submission.
* If you are writing a long thesis and you already have some of your work in almost final form, why not let us have a quick look at it now? That way, you can sort out the repetitive errors that have to be changed throughout your work and you can stop making the same mistakes in later work. An example: if you are writing about the United States and using Chicago style, did you know that U.S. takes periods and is only used as an adjective and the noun is always spelled out in full as United States? Or that you can change final punctuation in a direct quotation? There are also formatting issues that it is good to sort out early. (And rule number 1 is, never use manual formatting; let Word do the work.) Save yourself the trouble and get these things right from the beginning.
* Make use of Word’s hidden text features to make hidden notes to yourself. Ask us for more details.
* Make use of Word’s Sidebar which reveals all your headings (or less if you choose; try right-clicking in the sidebar to change the levels it shows) making it easy to navigate around your document.

#### Using Endnote (or another bibliographic database)

* We recommend keeping Endnote references and in-text citations in order from the beginning (saving a month or so of work at the end). Mark double-checked references with a code so you don’t have to check them again at the end. Do an update of references and bibliography every few months (on a copy not the original thesis) and scan for issues to sort out.

#### Other things to remember

* Give yourself time; get good advice now, not near the submission date. Feel free to [write to us](mailto:Chris@thepublicsentence.com); send us a page of your work and we’ll get back to you with complimentary advice (that’s free, gratis, sin costo, etc.)
* Backup, backup, backup. Use Dropbox, send by email to someone else, store on another site, etc. Don’t trust just one backup location. Don’t forget to backup your bibliographic database too.

Finally, good luck!

Chris and [The Public Sentence](http://www.thepublicsentence.com) team