

Josie's advice

Dealing with the Writing up Blues

All students complain, few, however, do so as frequently as post graduate students. When it comes to writing up, however, there is good reason for complaint. Few people are naturally gifted writers and the task of marshalling the work of three years in to a coherent and cogent text is daunting. There are numerous elephant traps along the way; boredom, lost notes, other more interesting projects, plus more serious difficulties. A common fear is that your big idea' has been done' by someone else (who, by the way, has just published a 300-page book and has received rave reviews

Read Someone Else's Thesis

The best confidence booster for anyone who is writing up is to have a look at a completed thesis, ideally in your field, better still, your supervisor's. And tell him or her what you thought of it when they are: a) being especially obnoxious b) when they are at their most vulnerable c) when you are in the Pub and broke, hoping that they might do the decent thing!

Extra Research

Be prepared to do additional research but not too much. Try not to get sidetracked by a very interesting, but totally irrelevant new set of ideas.

Shame Yourself

Tell everyone that you are writing a thesis. After they have realised how clever you are, they will irritate you to death asking how you are getting on. It acts as a wonderful spur. Not to complete will also cost you a massive loss of face.

Take a Break

Have a rest now and again. Try to take a weekend off every so often. Although you may feel massively guilty, it does help. Buy yourself a treat whenever you have completed a chapter, 10,000 words or whatever.

And Lastly ...

However disciplined you might be, there will be occasions when you find yourself, as I did, wandering around the shops seeking out unnecessary and useless objects. Occupations I often found myself engaged in included; writing letters to relatives I have not seen for years; making complicated cakes; bottling fruit; making chutney; cleaning carpets; reading no end of crap novels; watching the weepie on daytime telly; tidying cupboards; and visiting my mother. Despite the distractions and the problems, I managed to hand over the completed text to my supervisor. Go for it ...and good luck.