

# On Thesis Writing

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# Some thoughts on writing

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- Writing a thesis is (more or less) like writing a research paper
- Thesis contains same sections/chapters as a research paper, but is longer/more detailed
- **Have a look at conference + journal articles!**



# Language in a thesis

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Thesis should be ...

- **formal**
- **objective**
- **precise**
- **concise**
  
- Avoid slang
- No short forms  
(isn't, won't, ... are not appropriate)
- No direct speech  
(“And then the Moose said: '...'”)
- “I”/”we” are used only rarely; much passive voice  
(“The measurements were repeated three times”)



# What is wrong?

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- **“The Moose is the largest land animal in Sweden.”**
- Claims have to be supported by **references/citations**, experimental **evidence**, or **proofs**
- **“The Moose is the largest land animal in Sweden [42].”**  
...  
[42] Moose encyclopedia, 2008



# What is wrong? (2)

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- **“The Moose is the largest land animal in Sweden.”**
- If there is no good reference/evidence (or you are not entirely sure):
  - **Weaken the statement!**
  - There are numerous ways to do that ...
- E.g.,
  - “The Moose is **one of** the largest land animals in Sweden.”
  - “The Moose is **considered one of** the largest land animals in Sweden.”



# Structuring texts

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Avoid overly long

- **sentences** (at most 3 lines)
- **paragraphs** (at most 10-20 lines)
- **sections** (at most 1-2 pages)
  
- Every paragraph should have **one clear** message
- Section titles should be descriptive

**Too short:** “Moose”

**Better:** “An Overview of Moose in Scandinavia”

- Use clear, consistent numbering



# Proofreading

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- **Strictly necessary**
- Typical procedure:
  - Write some text
  - Proofread a day later, correct
  - Proofread more carefully a week later
- Eventually:
  - **Give the text to a friend of yours for checking!**
- Your supervisor/reviewer will be grateful if they do not have to read un-proofread texts!



# Word vs. LaTeX

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Experience shows:

- Learning LaTeX takes a while in the beginning
- But the results are **much more convincing** than anything written in Word (or similar)
  
- Good introduction:
  - Helmut Kopka et al, *“Guide to LaTeX”*
  - (check the library)





# CVS, SVN, Git, etc.

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- **Use it!** Versioning is always a good idea
- Much more powerful than Dropbox

Free (restricted) services are available on the web

- E.g., <http://beanstalkapp.com/>
- Including automated backups

Or: install on your own machine (**easy**)



# Start writing in time

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- **Writing always takes longer than expected**
- Do writing continuously while working on thesis



# Related work

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- (Overview of relevant research and development)
- **First section in report to write!**
- Should list all major lines of related work
  - Give proper references (to articles, books, etc)
  - Short descriptions
  - Compare with what you are doing (discussion)



# How to write an introduction

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Go from large to small:

- What is the context? (general introduction)
- What is the specific area you are working in?
- What is the problem you are trying to solve?
- What is the solution? (outline)
- What are the results?
  
- What are the contributions?
- Sometimes: already give examples in introduction



# Plagiarism

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- **Not tolerated, do not go there**
- When you are copying text, you have to
  - Use proper quotation
  - Give a reference

*“Unlike most other deer species, moose are solitary animals and do not form herds. Although generally slow-moving and sedentary, moose can become aggressive and move surprisingly fast if angered or startled.”*

Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moose>



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# Questions?

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Informationsteknologi