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How do you write an academic text?

Part III

Personal skills

When writing texts, and especially when writing longer texts like theses or reports, a good approach is important. You should realise that there are numerous ways to write a good text. It is important that you know how you yourself work. Are you someone who plans meticulously and, therefore, only has to fill in the text or do you come up with ideas while writing? Both ways of writing have their advantages and disadvantages. Read more about this at www.taalwinkel.nl under Language tip (*Taaltip*) 1274 *Wat voor type schrijver ben jij?* (What kind of writer are you?) Are you a Mozart or a Beethoven?

TIP Do the test *Wat voor type schrijver ben jij?* (What kind of writer are you?). Read more about this at www.taalwinkel.nl under *Taal*tip (Language tip) 3814 *Taaltesten* (Language testing). You can see from the result which of the numerous of components of writing you handle well and which you could improve. When receiving the results, you will be given advice about you can best work.

The correct working method

If you study at the University, you will have to write a lot. It is, therefore, important that you have a good command of this skill. Good writing does not only mean that you can formulate things clearly and correctly, but also that you can plan well, summarise, formulate a problem and substantiate your opinion. To put it briefly: writing is a complex task that consists of many sub-tasks. In order to execute those various tasks well, you need to go through them one by one. If you want to do everything good at the same time, something will

mostly go wrong: the structure will be unsound, there will be lots of language mistakes or the text will not contain all the necessary components. You should therefore ensure that you have a good working method when writing.

TIP Go to Language tip (*Taal*tip) 1044 at www.taalwinkel.nl 'De juiste werkwijze bij het schrijven van adviezen (The correct working method when writing opinions).

Create a step-by-step plan

A very important part skill when writing is planning. You need to make a clear and realistic time planning so that you can determine if you are on schedule and have a good overview of what you need to do and what you have done. It also works better psychologically if you can work and think step-by-step. The task becomes more concrete and more transparent instead of one big unclear mishmash. Plan in advance how long you need to collect information, formulate the research question, draw up the text outline and, in addition, when you want to have that in draft form per chapter. Stick to that plan as much as possible, and amend it depending on whether tasks fall short of or meet expectations.

Tip For more tips and recommendations about making and working with a step-by-step plan look at www.taalwinkel.nl under Language tip 3421 *Het plannen van een tekst* (Planning a text).

Writing a thesis

Writing a Bachelor's or Master's thesis is a complex task. There are various reasons for this. You don't know, for example, where and how you need to start, or you become totally blocked when you need to write.

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Or Dutch is not your mother tongue, so you find it difficult to express yourself in a nuanced way. And what is an academic writing style actually? How do you need to write then? Where do you find good sources and what are good sources? There are actually many more reasons why writing is sometimes unsuccessful. If you notice you share these types of problems, try to word what the problem is precisely, so that you can look for the right solution.

TIP At www.taalwinkel.nl under *Taaltip* (Language tip) 3709 you will find an overview of 10 common thesis problems. You can click on each problem for recommendations.

At the Institute for Dutch Language Education, you can take the course *Beter Schrijven* (Better Writing) if you have problems writing academic texts.

TIP Always have your text read by one or more critical readers before you submit the final version. You have seen your own text too often to still be able to look at it in an unprejudiced way.

Command of Dutch

When you start a study, your command of Dutch must be pre-university level (Dutch VWO) If you still have language or writing problems because Dutch is not your mother tongue, for example, or is not the language that is spoken at home, you can take a course to improve your Dutch. Contact the Institute for Dutch Language Education of the UvA in the PC Hoofthuis, room 406, call (020) 525 4654 or visit their website: www.intt.uva.nl.

Dealing with feedback

A personal skill that is very important to writing, is being able to handle feedback. The texts that you write will often be assessed by one or more readers. This could be your lecturer, but that can also be fellow students or a client. A good text is almost never created in one round of writing, but needs to ripen. It is, therefore, necessary that the text is rewritten and rewritten. If you incorporate the feedback that you get from others into your text, the text will mostly become better. Don't feel attacked too quickly if you receive criticism about your text, but be open to others' suggestions. You can be quite certain that critical readers will remove ambiguities and mistakes, which would also be problematic for other readers or which they find disturbing.

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