

Doctoral Student Cheat Sheet

Researching, writing, and dissertating



by Justin S. Hartly

Doctoral Candidate

University of Chicago, Crown Family School

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I am not smart, but I work really hard to ensure that my scholarship is high quality (so that I seem smart). Oftentimes this work means that I must leverage resources and tools to do better research, write more clearly, and produce a quality dissertation. Over the years, I have used many resources to help me in my doctoral studies. I have compiled many of them here in the hope that they are useful to others who struggle in school like I do. I am a qualitative social work researcher using Mac and the resources contained in this cheat sheet reflect that. Resources are linked to source content and many I found by following [@WriteThatPhD](#), [@raulpacheco](#), and [@WriteNThrive](#) or shared on [Prof2Prof](#) ([@P2Phigher.ed](#)) so follow and join them for more resources.

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RESEARCH

Research is a difficult journey. It's dangerous to go alone! Take this (The Legend of Zelda, 1986).

Starting

These texts help me get my research started.

- [The craft of inquiry: Theories, methods, evidence](#)
- [The craft of research](#)
- [Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research](#)
- [Methodological thinking: Basic principles of social research design](#)
- [Digital paper: A manual for research and writing with library and internet materials](#)

Managing

I am a disorganized procrastinator. These resources help me be less of a disordered slacker.

- Files:** [File naming conventions](#)
- Pipeline:** [Managing your research pipeline](#)
- Email:** [Stack Method](#)
- Planner:** [Full Focus Planner](#)
- Schedule:** [Calendly](#), [When2Meet](#), and [Doodle](#)
- Meet:** [Whereby](#), [Zoom](#), [FaceTime](#), or phone call
- Leave:** [Alert](#) and phone sounds to get out of a meeting
- Collaborate:** [Riseup](#) and [Google](#)
- Focus:** [Pomodoro](#), [Calmly](#), [Noisli](#), and [Kmart music](#)
- Unfocus:** [Old games](#), [new games](#), and [useless websites](#).

Finding

Google Scholar and my library are fine for finding literature. However, they both lack linked literature searches. I use these resources for citation mapping (literature mapped by citations), citation context (literature citation usage), and citations used in syllabi (literature linked in shared syllabi).

Mapping	Context	Syllabi
ConnectedPapers	scite_	Open Syllabus
Inciteful	Dimensions	Prof2Prof
Litmap	Semantic Scholar	

Assessing

As an early scholar, I struggled with how to assess research I read. These texts help me critically assess research.

- [Evaluating research in academic journals: A practical guide to realistic evaluation](#)
- [Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences](#)

Organizing

The first heated debate I observed after starting my doctoral studies was between two PhD students arguing over which citation reference manager was best. I'll save you your humanity—they all largely do the same thing. Pick one and move on with your life. I chose Zotero because it's free, open-sourced, easy to use, and has a bunch of useful plug-ins.

Reference Managers

[Zotero](#) [Mendeley](#) [Endnote](#) [Papers](#) [Bookends](#)

Database managers are like reference managers, but they allow you to search your PDFs using keywords, Boolean search operators, and word proximity. These are essential tools.

Database Managers

[DEVONthink](#) [FoxTrot](#) [Tropy](#) [PDF Search](#)

Doing

I have found many amazing methods guides, bibliographies, and resources from these blogs and websites:

Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
QualPage	UCLA	MethodsSpace
TQR	Stats How To	CCRC
IIQM	r/statistics	Mixed Methods

Analyzing

Here are common data analysis tools I use. The first row contains the data analysis software I use most often.

Transcription	Qualitative	Quantitative
Rev	MAXQDA	Stata
Otter.ai	NVivo	SPSS
Temi	Dedoose	R

WRITE

These writing resources help me strengthen my writing.

Beginning

I use a combination of these texts to begin writing.

- 📖 [Writing for social sciences: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article](#)
- 📖 [The craft of scientific writing](#)
- 📖 [Write it up: Practical strategies for writing and publishing journal articles](#)
- 📖 [The elements of academic style: Writing for the humanities](#)
- 📖 [How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing](#)
- 📖 [Becoming an academic writer: 50 exercises for paced, productive and powerful writing](#)
- 📖 [They say/I say: Moves that matter in academic writing](#)
- 📖 [Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die](#)

Typsetting

I used to use traditional software for outlining, drafting, compiling, and creating presentation slides. Microsoft's paid suite as well as Apple's and OpenOffice's free suites are sufficient, but they are burdensome and glitchy. Here are the software programs I use instead, with the first row containing the programs I use most often.

Outline	Draft	Compile	Present
Scapple	Scrivener	L ^A T _E X	Beamer
Notion	Ulysses	Mellel	Deckset

Phrasing

Academic phrasebanks convert common language to academic language using phrases common in scientific writing.

Academic Phrasebanks

Website & Ebook	Book	Software
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Corpus-based tools help you when you know what to say but cannot find the right word.

Corpus Tools

Netspeak	Words & Phrases	Phraseup	FrazeIt
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Editing

I am a poor writer (at first). These texts and applications help me edit and revise my writing into something readable.

- 📖 [The elements of style](#)
- 📖 [On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction](#)
- 📖 [On revision: The only writing that counts](#)
- 📖 [How to fix your academic writing trouble](#)
- 📖 [The writer's diet: A guide to fit prose](#)
- 📖 [Line by line: How to improve your own writing](#)
- 📖 [Dreyer's English: An utterly correct guide to clarity and style](#)

Editing Applications

Grammarly	ProWritingAid	Hemingway	Microsoft
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Structuring

When I began writing manuscripts, I was sometimes confused by what to include and where to put it. These resources will help you structure your manuscript using commonly adopted approaches to manuscript structures.

- 📖 [Structure of a scholarly manuscript: 66 tips for what goes where](#)
- 📖 [Writing and publishing scientific papers: A primer for the non-english speaker](#)

Reporting

Reporting standards will serve as a guide on how to structure your manuscript. They also serve as a reminder of what to include in your manuscript when writing or what to check

a manuscript for when peer-reviewing. Manuscripts differ so do not think of these as requirements—they are more like thorough suggestions.

- **Qualitative**
 - 📖 **JARS Qual:** Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology [[Supplement](#)]
 - 📖 **COREQ:** Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research [[Supplement](#)]
 - 📖 **SRQR:** Standards for reporting qualitative research [[Supplement](#)]
- **Quantitative**
 - 📖 **JARS Quant:** Journal article reporting standards for quantitative research in psychology [[Supplement](#)]
 - 📖 **CONSORT:** Consolidated standards of reporting trials [[Supplement & Extensions](#)]
 - 📖 **Title IV-E:** Prevention services clearinghouse reporting guide for study authors [[Supplement](#)]
- **Mixed Methods**
 - 📖 **JARS Mixed:** Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology [[Supplement](#)]
- **Reviews**
 - 📖 **PRISMA:** The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews [[Supplement & Extensions](#)]
 - 📖 **PRISMA ScR:** PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews [[Supplement](#)]
 - 📖 **Cochrane:** Cochrane qualitative and implementation methods group [[Supplement](#)]
- **Need more?** Additional reporting standards can be found on [EQUATOR Network](#)

Here are some additional texts on reporting standards.

- 📖 [Reporting qualitative research in psychology: How to meet APA style journal article reporting standards](#)
- 📖 [Standards for reporting qualitative research](#)
- 📖 [Reporting qualitative research: Standards, challenges, and implications for health design](#)

Reviewing

I hate starting literature reviews, but once I get organized it becomes enjoyable. These texts help get literature reviews

off the ground.

- 📖 The literature review: Six steps to success
- 📖 Doing a literature review: Releasing the research imagination
- 📖 Preparing literature reviews: Qualitative and quantitative approaches
- 📖 The literature review: Step-by-step guide for students
- 📖 Seven steps to a comprehensive literature review: A multimodal and cultural approach
- 📖 Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences
- 📖 An introduction to systematic reviews
- 📖 Doing a systematic review: A student's guide
- 📖 Systematic approaches to a successful literature review

Preparation

Preparing manuscripts for publication is as fun as it sounds. Here are some resources I use to help me polish up my manuscripts for peer-review.

- 📖 100 research rules of the game: How to make your research world class
- 📖 Twelve tips for getting your manuscript published
- 📖 Overcoming fears: A pathway to publishing for early career researchers

DISSERTATE

I found these texts helpful in preparing and completing (hopefully soon) my dissertation.

Proposing

- 📖 Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals
- 📖 Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation

Defending

- 📖 100 PhD rules of the game to successfully complete a doctoral dissertation
- 📖 Dissertation journey: Practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending dissertations
- 📖 The dissertation warrior: The ultimate guide to being the kind of person who finishes a doctoral dissertation
- 📖 A guide to writing the dissertation literature review

- 📖 Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end
- 📖 Qualitative dissertation methodology: A guide for research design and methods

PROTECT

Completing a doctoral program is extremely challenging and lonely at times. Please take care of yourself. This section contains links to help protect you and ensure your safety, security, and sobriety.

Safety

- 🌐 **Balance:** Exercise, stretch, yoga, nutrition, nap, sleep
- 🌐 **Relax:** Breathe, meditate, listen, draw, or do nothing

Security

- 🌐 National hotlines for suicide prevention (800-273-8255 or by chat), domestic violence (800-799-7233 or text "START" to 88788), sexual assault (800-656-4673 or by chat), mental health/substance use (800-662-4357), child abuse (read this before calling, 800-422-4453), HIV/AIDS (800-232-4636), general crises (text "HOME" to 741741), grad crises (877-472-3457), and veteran crises (800-273-8255 or text 838255).

Sobriety

- 🌐 12 step fellowships of Alcoholics, Cocaine, Narcotics, and Marijuana Anonymous including family/friend support groups (Al-Anon/ACoA, Co-Anon, Nar-Anon, Mar-Anon, FA) and other fellowships. You can also access the Big Book, Twelve and Twelve, Daily Reflections, and Twenty Four Hours a Day online.

SOCIAL WORK APPENDIX

This section contains resources specific to social work.

Reporting

- Qualitative
 - 📖 Strengthening qualitative studies and reports: Standards to promote academic integrity
 - 📖 Writing up qualitative research

- 📖 Author guidelines for manuscripts reporting on qualitative research
- 📖 JARS Qual: Applying the standards to social work research

- Quantitative
 - 📖 Suggested reporting guidelines to improve health-related social work research
 - 📖 Use of the template for intervention description and replication (Tidier) checklist in social work research
- Mixed Methods
 - 📖 Writing a mixed methods report in social work research
- Using Reporting Standards
 - 📖 Rigor, transparency, and reporting social science research: Why guidelines don't have to kill your story

Versions

- 1.0
 - Resources for researching, writing, and dissertation completion
- Future versions will add resources for:
 - Coursework (e.g., reading, note taking, etc.)
 - Program completion (e.g., preparing for comps)
 - Peer-review (e.g., preparing for and responding)
 - Teaching (e.g., course development, syllabi)
 - Job market (e.g., interviews, talks, negotiations)
 - Academic podcasts
 - Historical research methods
 - Additional social work specific resources