Guide for academic writing

Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

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Contents

Foreword

Dear students,

These guidelines have been compiled by the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences at the BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg to help you with your academic work and to answer basic questions about working methods, workflows and tools for academic writing.[1]

In addition to useful tips on research, this guide provides you with a description of the basic requirements for academic work as well as methodological, content-related and formal assistance for the preparation of written work.

Please note that the following tips on text design are only suggestions of proven standards. You should always discuss the framework conditions of a paper (layout, formal design, structure, structure/outline, etc.) with your teacher as early as possible, as individual teachers may also require other standards.

[1] For this guide, content and/or text passages from various guides were used.
and put them together. Special thanks are due to the work contained in the following four guidelines:(1) Guidelines of the Institute of Philosophy at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main (Dalessandro et al. 2015) , (2) Richtlinien zur Erstellung und Gestaltung Wissenschaftlicher Arbeiten am Lehrstuhl für Wirtschafts- und Industriesoziologie der BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg (Brandenburgische Technische Institut für Sozialwissenschaften und Philosophie Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg, Lehrstuhl für Wirtschafts- und Industriesoziologie 2025) , (3) Leitfaden zu den Techniken wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens des Instituts für Medienwissenschaft der Ruhr Universität Bochum (Hohenberger u. a. 2022) and (4) Wie verfasse ich eine wissenschaftliche Arbeit? Hints, suggestions and advice for students at the Institute of Social Sciences (Both et al. 2012) .

1. General requirements for written work

During your studies, you will be confronted with different types of texts as part of your examination. Each type of text has its own specific content and stylistic criteria. These include thesis papers, exposés, seminar papers and Bachelor's or Master's theses. Nevertheless, common principles of academic work and writing apply to all text types. The following chapters explain these principles.

Every scientific text refers to other scientific texts. You will largely apply existing scientific knowledge to problems and questions you have formulated yourself. You must therefore first find the relevant knowledge *(Chapter 2 - Research)*. Then you must cite this knowledge and the appropriate sources in your own text and create a bibliography *(Chapter 3 - Referencing and citing sources)*. Depending on the form of the written paper you have to submit, a suitable structure or outline of the content must be chosen *(Chapter 4 - Structure of written papers)*. There is no one way to use "correct academic language", but you are advised to use clear, understandable language and avoid certain expressions *(Chapter 5 - Language rules)*. All academic papers should also adhere to the formal guidelines regarding layout and design of the paper *(Chapter 6 - Formal guidelines)*. Once a first draft of the text has been written, it is necessary to revise and proofread a scientific text. You can go through the checklist *(Chapter 7 - Checklist)* for this, as well as for an overview of all relevant work steps.

2. Research

Suitable literature for your research can be found in different places. First of all, you should get an overview of which sources are considered citable for academic work *(chapter 2.1)*. You can either find the source for your work via the BTU libraries, city libraries and the online services of libraries (e.g. LAUBERT) or you can carry out a targeted online search, where you will find suitable literature or, in some cases, freely accessible full texts (Google Scholar, Open Source) *(chapter 2.2)*. In order to structure your research and keep track of what you have already read, it can help you to work with software (e.g. Mendeley/ Zotero) and other forms of documentation (work journal/excerpt) at to manage the literature you have found and organize your knowledge *(chapter 2.3)*.

Tip: Snowball system for efficient research

With a keyword search (search for the main terms of your topic) you can often get an initial overview of what literature exists on your topic. Once you have found the first suitable literature, the snowball system is a popular research method. The snowball system is when you come across literature by other authors by reading bibliographies and use this as a further source. Let's say there is a chapter on critical theory in the anthology "Introduction to Sociology", then you look for suitable literature in this chapter in the bibliography, in this one again, and so on.

Important: Since many people work according to the **snowball system**, false information can be carried over**.** In the worst-case scenario, you may cite literature that does not exist. Therefore, only ever cite references from texts that you have read or checked.

2.1 What are suitable (citable) sources?

The origin and quality of the **source** used have a direct impact on the quality of your text. For this reason, you should - as a rule - only use recognized **scientific sources**. The use of sources for your data collection is an exception (e.g. if you are conducting a discourse analysis on the presentation of short-lived technology in tabloid magazines). You cannot use sources whose origin or author is unclear and therefore cannot be cited.

Tip: From the general to the specific!

We recommend that you study a topic using (e-)books (textbooks, anthologies, handbooks, specialist dictionaries) and then deepen your basic knowledge by reading specialist articles/"papers", as these deal with specific issues in even greater detail and with reference to current specialist discussions.

Quotable are:

- Scientific textbooks or textbooks
- Scientific publications in magazines/journals, collections of articles or conference proceedings
- Research reports
- Annual reports
- Valid internet sources (with author) (e.g. blog of the German Sociological Association or the post-growth blog)
- Expert discussions (put in writing)
- Results of own surveys (e.g. interviews, analyses)
- Systematic observations (e.g. in behavioral research)

However, the following are not citable*:

- Popular literature (e.g. novels)
- Tabloid newspapers and magazines (e.g.: BILD, Express, Gala)
- Lecture notes
- General encyclopedias (as opposed to specialized encyclopedias)
- Private websites
- Wikipedia

**Only if these texts are part of the data set, e.g. of a discourse analysis, can they be cited.*

2.2 Where can I find the right sources?

2.2.1 (Online) libraries of the BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg

The BTU has three **library locations**:

1. on the Cottbus Central Campus (IKMZ)
2. in Cottbus-Sachsendorf
3. in Senftenberg

For more detailed information on the locations and opening hours, please refer to the University Library website. To familiarize yourself with the **libraries**, the respective services or academic work, you can use the courses offered by the BTU.
You can also access the holdings of the Cottbus City and Regional Library and the library in Senftenberg and the surrounding area.

2.2.2 LAUBERT - the online library portal of the BTU

LAUBERT stands for Lausitzer Buch- und e-Publikations-Recherche-Tool and is the online library portal of the BTU Cottbus.

With LAUBERT you have access to:

- the library catalog of all three BTU libraries
- Online article
- Interlibrary loan

You can use LAUBERT to access information on books, journals and links to electronic media in the **library catalog.** Please use the library catalog to obtain information on availability, reservations, stacks orders or the guide.

Furthermore, you can view **online articles** that are freely available or from which the license has been purchased by clicking on the link to the full text or the DOI of the article. For licensed articles, access via the campus network is required, possibly via the BTU's personalized VPN access.

You can use the **interlibrary loan option** to view further entries in the GVI (Gemeinsamer Verbünde Index) of the libraries in order to order them to the library location of your choice.

In addition to the library catalog, you can also search your sources more specifically via **subject-specific databases**. The BTU library has access to many recognized databases, which are listed and linked in the **database information system**. On the Database Info System website, you can search for **databases** by subject area. If you click on a **database,** for example on WISO (Economics and Social Sciences), you will get all the information on how to access the **database** and how to use it. Some databases can only be accessed via VPN or the campus network. Common databases are, for example, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, JSTOR or WISO.

Tip: Installing the BTU VPN

With the BTU Virtual Private Network (VPN) you can connect to the campus network from outside the university. You then surf with a BTU-internal IP address and have access to all BTU services, for example to the databases and sources of the library catalog. All information about the VPN and how to configure a VPN client can be found on the website of the BTU Media Center.

2.3 Online research

On the one hand, there are general search engines that you can use for online research:

- Startpage
- Google
- Google Advanced Search
- Google Books

You should also use the services of so-called **academic search engines** that specialize in searching academic sources:

- Google Scholar
- BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine)

Search engines such as Google Scholar and BASE list and provide access to all possible cross-disciplinary sources (e.g. scientific articles, books, conference papers in various languages). On scientific databases such as ScienceDirect or Web of Science, only scientific articles from specific journals or specific subject areas can be found. However, using these databases ensures that the sources meet scientific standards and in most cases have undergone a peer review process. Web of Science, for example, collects the journals with the highest rankings, i.e. the most widely circulated, read and cited scientific journals.

There are also **platforms** on which many researchers make their texts available without a payment barrier:

- ResearchGate (if the full texts are not freely accessible on the platform, you can ask the authors for their texts via ResearchGate).
- Academia.edu

2.4 Structuring and organizing literature

2.4.1 Reference management programs

With the help of a **reference management program**, you can manage the collected sources in one place, mark relevant text passages and add notes. **Reference management programs** automatically save information about the collected literature required for citations. When writing academic papers, the **reference management program** can be linked to word processing programs such as Word. The citations in the text and in the bibliography are then automatically generated according to the stored data. This makes work much easier for the

author. The BTU recommends the open source program Zotero, which can be downloaded free of charge at the following link.
Other programs are also freely accessible online, such as Mendeley or JabRef. Until 31.11.2023, the BTU provided a campus license for the provider Citavi free of charge. After this date, however, access to Citavi is no longer paid for and guaranteed by the BTU.

Tip: Work with Zotero as early as possible in your studies!
It will save you a lot of work if you have already practiced and worked with a citation program before you start working on your thesis. That's why it's best to start with the installation now!

2.4.2 Work journal

"Writing is a heuristic process. This means that thoughts develop, clarify and deepen as you write. Good thoughts are rarely born in one night. They are usually the result of a lot of thinking and reflecting, discussing, reading and writing" (Boeglin 2012:76) . A **working journal** can be helpful to support the writing process during and after the literature research and to record the development of your thoughts. In your working journal, you can write down and record your thoughts, questions, observations or initial parts of the text. Writing regularly in your **working journal** will help you to gain clarity and make it easier to complete your academic work (Boeglin . 2012)

According to Boeglin (Boeglin 2012:76) the following can be noted in the work journal:

- Thoughts, ideas
- Questions, problematic points
- Definitions of terms
- Observations, ideas heard, suggestions
- Short texts that deal with one point of your topic
- Draft outlines
- Draft titles
- Drafts for introduction and conclusion
- Drafts for the first sentence of the introduction or the last sentence of the conclusion
- Weekly balance sheets
- Problems with the writing process
- Reflections on the writing process

2.4.3 The excerpt

When reading texts, it is impossible to memorize everything. In order to find the content of the texts you have read later, it is important to take notes while reading, write down important quotations and write down all the important information that will later be relevant for writing the academic paper in one place. The **excerpt** can help you to systematize the summary of the texts you have read thanks to a concrete structure (Boeglin, 2012)

Boeglin (2012) explains what needs to be considered when writing an **excerpt:**

- Summarize the statements of the text in your own words
- Write down whole sentences instead of key words to be able to understand the thoughts later
- Distinguish between direct and indirect quotations
- Check secondary quotations in the original text to avoid errors
- Read the excerpt regularly to memorize the contents
- Edit the excerpt when new connections or information are added. Connections, ideas or analyses can be recorded in combination with the work journal.

3. Substantiate and cite sources

Using and referencing sources is the core of every scientific paper. Correct citation always involves two steps:

1. Cite the source used in the body text
2. List all sources used in the bibliography

In the following, different citation styles (*chapter 3.1*), rules for correct citation in the text (*chapter 3.2*), rules for creating bibliographies (*chapter 3.3*) and for avoiding plagiarism (*chapter 3.4*) are presented.

3.1 Citation styles

There are many different **citation styles** for referencing the sources used in your text. A citation style determines how references are to be marked in the body text and in which order they should be listed in the bibliography. If you are still undecided about which citation style to use, the following overview can help you. In principle, there are three categories of citation styles:

Table 1: Overview of the three citation systems

Citation system	Use in continuous text	Application in the bibliography	Citation styles that use this system:
Name-date system	The source is **cited** in the continuous text as a **short reference** directly or in brackets with the name of the author and the year of publication.	It is sorted alphabetically. All sources are listed as **full references.**	Harvard citation style, APA citation style, ASA citation style
Numerical system	Each source is given a **number.** The number of the source is indicated in the running text (in brackets).	It is sorted numerically. All sources are listed as **full references.**	Vancouver citation style, IEEE citation style
Footnote system	Here the sources used on a page are given as **full references** with footnotes at the bottom of the page	It is sorted alphabetically. All sources are listed as **full references.**	Chicago or German citation style

The **full reference** contains all the details of the respective source as they are listed in the bibliography (e.g. author, title, place, publisher, year). A **short reference**, on the other hand, usually only lists the author, year and page number as a substitute for the full details.

Important: In our institute there is no fixed citation style. For the following citation examples and rules, the ASA (American Sociological Association) citation style from the name-date citation system is used. However, you can also work with a numerical or footnote system in your work. **The main thing is that you decide on a citation style in your work and use it consistently.**

Application example full document & short document (ASA citation style)

Short reference (in continuous text)

Direct quote:	(last name year: page)	(Boeglin 2012:150)
Indirect quotation with page:	(cf. last name year: page)	(cf. Boeglin 2012:150)
Indirect quotation without page:	(last name year)	(Boeglin 2012)

Full reference (in the bibliography)

Last name, first name. Year. *Title. Subtitle.* Edition. Place: Publisher	Boeglin, Martha. 2012. *Working scientifically step by step. Study calmly and effectively.* 2nd edition. Paderborn/ Stuttgart: UTB

3.2 Quoting correctly in the text

Citing sources is the basis of every scientific paper. With the help of citations, you reproduce the findings of other researchers in your text and can build on them. There are different types of citations and rules on how to insert citations correctly into your texts: direct citation, indirect citation of sources, citation within a citation and secondary citations (Table 2).

Table 2: Citation types, based on the overview in Citing correctly - Overview & examples of citation types (Scribbr 2025)

Quote	**Explanation**	**Example**
Direct quote	Word-for-word reproduction of third-party texts	"A uniform citation style is important" (Schmidt 2020: 23).
Indirect quotation/ paraphrasing	Paraphrasing text to express other people's ideas in your own words	Schmidt (2020) emphasizes the relevance of a uniform citation style. It is relevant to use a consistent citation style (cf. Schmidt 2020: 23)
Quote within a quote	A direct quote that contains a quote from another person	"Original sources must be identified if it is a 'quotation within a quotation' (Schmidt 2020: 23)" (Rose 2021: 50).
Secondary quote	Reproduction of a source that in turn refers to another source	"A uniform citation style is important" (Schmidt, 2020, cited in Rose, 2021: 50).

You should mainly use direct and indirect quotations in your text. A **direct quotation** is used to support a thesis, which you then explain and comment on independently. It does not replace the explanation, but illustrates your own. In an **indirect quotation**, you reproduce the meaning of ideas you have adopted in your own words. The statement is therefore retained and expressed in your own words. In general, every quotation must be identified and proven (see 3.4 Avoiding plagiarism). **Quotations within quotations** should only be used in exceptional cases if the specific nature of the quotation is to be emphasized. **Secondary quotations** should only be used if you do not have access to the original source.

Table 3: Rules for direct and indirect citation

Direct quotes (as well as quotation within quotation, secondary quotation)	**Indirect quotations**

- Direct quotations are **placed between quotation marks** "..."
- Direct quotations **must be reproduced true to the original and to the letter** (even with errors) and may not be altered
- Own changes must be marked in square brackets **[change]**. Recognized spelling mistakes etc. in the original must be marked directly after the relevant passage with a **[!] or [sic!**
- Emphases in the quoted text that have been added or omitted subsequently are indicated by the addition **[author's note]**, for example
- Omissions in the quotation are indicated by three dots in square brackets **[...]**
- Text passages that are in quotation marks in the original text are placed between simple apostrophes **'...'** in the quotation
- If the quotation is in a foreign language that is not understood by the reader, foreign language quotations must be translated. To do this, cite the translated quotation in the text and reproduce the original source in a footnote. After the translated quote, write in square brackets: [**Author's translation]**
- At the beginning and end of direct quotations, capitalization and punctuation can be adapted to your own text
- Quotations of more than three lines are indented, single-spaced and, if necessary, written in a smaller font and without quotation marks
	- Indirect quotations are **not** placed **between quotation marks**
	- The indirectly quoted statement should be put in the **subjunctive mood**
	- The reference begins with **cf.**
	- **The beginning and end of the quotation must** be **recognizable**. For example, an indirect quotation can be identified with the following formulations:
	  - "... this section is based on..."
	  - "... this section refers to..."
	  - "... in the opinion of..."
	  - "Loud/after..."
	  - "The author shows that..."
	  - "In his/her/your opinion..."
	  - "He/she assumes that..."
	  - "...according to the author..."
	  - "The text of...contains information about..."
	  - "so too"
	  - "of the same opinion"
	  - "different but"

Application examples Citing in text (ASA citation style)

Original quote

"Electronic products", but also common subcategories such as household appliances, information and communication technologies and consumer electronics, are merely container terms for a variety of different types of artifacts that still need to be differentiated in further research." (Jaeger-Erben 2017:7)

Direct quote:

(1) *Thus, technical devices are described as "container terms for a variety of different types of artifacts, which still need to be strongly differentiated in the further investigation." (Jaeger-Erben 2017:7).*

Indirect quotations:

(1) *The frequently used designations of electronic devices with a differentiation according to the areas of application serve only as generic terms whose meanings require specification (cf. Jaeger-Erben 2017).*

(2) *According to Jaeger-Erben (2017), the term electronic devices often includes many different subcategories of artifacts that need to be further differentiated.*

How is literature cited by two authors?

Direct quote: (**last name/last name** year: page)
Indirect quotation: (cf. **Last name/last name** year: page)
Named in the text: **Last name and last name** (year: page)

Examples:

One study states that "X has nothing to do with Y" (**Müller/Neuer** 2019:23).
Research shows that ... (cf. **Müller/Neuer** 2019:65).
Müller and Neuer (2019:65) describe that ...

How is literature by three or more authors cited?

Direct quotation: (Surname **et al.** Year: Page)
Indirect quotation: (cf. surname **et al.** year: page)
Named in the text: Surname **et al.** (Year: Page)

Examples:

One study states that "X has nothing to do with Y" (Müller **et al.** 2019:23).
Current research suggests that ... (cf. Müller **et al.** 2019:12).
Müller **et al.** (2019:12) argue that ...

How is a direct quote that is longer than 2 lines cited and displayed?

- As a block separated from the body text
- Reduce the font size (for normal size from 12 pt. to 10 pt.)
- Indent tabs for this quotation block by 1 cm
- Set line spacing to *single*
- Blank lines before and after to separate from the rest of the text
- Quotation marks are no longer necessary in this case
- The source is indicated after the point

Example:

Reading it, it becomes clear:

> No matter which citation style is used: Consistency is the key to success. Careless mistakes can happen and that's fine, but you should still pay close attention when writing your paper. Maximum concentration is then required, especially when proofreading. (Gates et al. 2017:47)

How are multiple sources that refer to the same statement cited?

With page numbers: (cf. last name year: page**;** last name year: page**;** last name year: page)

Without page numbers: (last name year**;** last name year**;** last name year)

Examples:

Various studies show that ... (see Reus et al. 2018:25**;** Müller et al. 2019:12).
Various studies show that ... (Reus et al. 2018**;** Müller et al. 2019).

When can (ibid.) be used?

- Abbreviation ibid. (ibid. = exactly, just there)
- replaces the surnames of the authors and the year of publication if they are cited twice or more in succession.
- Can be used if the previous source reference
    a. in the same paragraph or
    b. can be found on the same page.

Examples:

The study revealed ... (cf. Müller 2019:23).
In addition, it also emerged that ... (cf. ibid.:28).
"The same study in the quote" (ibid.:31).

3.3 Bibliography

The **bibliography** follows immediately after the text of the paper. If the paper has an appendix, the bibliography is placed before the appendix. It contains the source information for each (!) direct and indirect citation listed in the text. Conversely, only sources that are cited in the text may be included in the bibliography. In this way, the bibliography demonstrates a comprehensive examination of the topic and serves as a reference point for literature research. The bibliography should not be confused or mixed up with other bibliographies (list of figures, list of abbreviations, list of tables, etc.) (see chapter 6.3).

3.3.1 Rules for the bibliography

- The entries in the bibliography are to be arranged alphabetically according to the (first) surnames (in the Harvard citation style, otherwise differently if necessary)
- Within the same surnames, sorting is based on the first names
- Several titles by the same author are arranged in ascending chronological order: Ex:
    - Jaeger-Erben, Melanie. 2017. planned or induced wear and tear? ...
    - Jaeger-Erben, Melanie. 2019. a question of culture? ...
- If several titles with co-authors have the same first author, they are sorted within this group according to the name of the second author
- Several texts by the same author from the same year are differentiated with lower case letters (2007a, 2007b etc.). All references in the continuous text must be marked with the corresponding letter
- In contrast to continuous text, the bibliography should be formatted flush left to avoid unsightly stretching
- For a better overview, the first line of each entry can be formatted with a hanging special indent, giving the impression of a bulleted list

3.3.2 Examples of bibliography use (ASA citation style)

How are monographs (book by author - without editor) correctly cited?

One author: Last name, first name. Year. Title. Subtitle. Edition. Place: Publisher.
Two authors: Last name, first name & Last name, first name. Year. Title. Subtitle. Edition. Place: Publisher.
More than two authors: Last name, first name, last name, first name & last name, first name. Year. Title. Subtitle. Edition. Place: Publisher.

Examples:

Boeglin, Martha. 2012. Working scientifically step by step. Study calmly and effectively. 2nd edition. Paderborn/ Stuttgart: UTB.

Buzan, T. & Buzan, B. 2005. The Mind Map Book - The best method to increase your mental potential. Munich: MVG.

Franck, A., Haacke, S. & Lahm, S. 2007. Schlüsselkompetenzen: Schreiben in Studium und Beruf. Stuttgart: Metzle.

How are anthology contributions (book by author - with editor) correctly cited?

Surname, first name. Year. Title. Subtitle. In: Author (ed.): Title. Subtitle. (Page number p. X-Y). Edition. Place: Publisher.

Examples:

Bargh, J. A. & Chartrand, T. 2000. The mind in the middle: A practical guide to priming and automaticity research. In H. T. Reis & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology* (pp. 253-285). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

German Society for Psychology (ed.). 2007. *guidelines for manuscript design* (3rd ed.). Göttingen: Hogrefe.

How are journal articles (e.g. scientific journal articles) correctly cited?

Surname, first name. Year. Title. Subtitle. In: Journal title, volume, issue, page number X-Y. doi, if applicable.

Examples:

Zwiers, J., Jaeger-Erben, M. & Hofmann, F. 2020. *Circular literacy. A knowledge-based approach to the circular economy*. Culture and Organization, 26:2, 121-141. 10.1080/14759551.2019.1709065

Anderson, M. C., Bjork, R. A. & Bjork, E. L. 1994. Remembering can cause forgetting: Retrieval dynamics in long-term memory. In: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 20, 1063-1084.

How are newspaper articles correctly quoted?

Surname, first name. Year. Title of the article, in: Newspaper, publication date, URL + retrieval date (for online newspaper) / pages (for print newspaper).

Examples:

Rodemann, J. 2020. Nobel Prize in Chemistry goes to two female gene researchers, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 07.10.2020, [online] https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/nobelpreis-2020-chemie-1.5057356 [accessed on 05.11.2020].

Rodemann, J. 2020. Nobel Prize in Chemistry goes to two female geneticists, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 07.10.2020, p. 5-6.

How are internet sources correctly cited?

Surname, first name. Year. Website title, website, URL [retrieved on retrieval date].

Example:

Erichsen, C. 2020. Inclusion on the internet: How to make social media content accessible, t3n, [online] https://t3n.de/magazin/inklusion-im-internet-so-werden-249553/ [accessed 05.11.2020].

How are videos correctly cited?

Surname, first name. Year. Title of the video. Video platform, creation date, URL [retrieved on retrieval date].

GWriters International Inc. 2016. What you should look for in a ghostwriting agency. Youtube, 24.02.2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOlbDy12AO0 [accessed on 05.11.2020].

How are posts on social media correctly quoted?

Name or username. Year. Title (the first 20 words of the post can be entered as the title). Platform. URL [retrieved on retrieval date].

Drosten, C. [c_drosten]. 2020: Towards the end of the course, the PCR is sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Chance plays a role here. If you ... [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/c_drosten/status/1249800091164192771 [accessed on 05.11.2020].

Scribbr. 2020. There are many guidelines and explanations on how to cite literature in your Bachelor's or Master's thesis ..., [Status Update], Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/scribbr/10102217102231151 [accessed 05.11.2020].

3.4 Avoid plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the partial or complete use of another person's work without indicating the source and identifying the author. This also includes if the text was not written by the author but was created by others or software programs.

3.4.1 Possible forms of plagiarism

There are a variety of forms of plagiarism:

- **"Ghostwriter plagiarism"** if the text was written by another person (on commission) but is submitted under the author's own name.
- **Full plagiarism**, the copying of another scientific text of which you claim to be the author.
- **Self-plagiarism,** the submission of a piece of work (or parts thereof) for several examinations.

- **Translation plagiarism**, the passing off of translated foreign-language texts or parts of foreign-language texts as one's own text without citing the source.
- **Copy and paste plagiarism,** the insertion of text excerpts from (scientific) texts without identifying the source with a citation. This also includes downloading and using parts of texts from the Internet without citing the source
- **AI plagiarism**, the use of software-supported text programs (e.g. chatGPT) to create the text or parts of the text.

3.4.2 Verification of plagiarism

At BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, the framework regulations state (§ 20 para. 4):

> *If the student attempts to influence the result of his or her examination by cheating or using unauthorized aids, if he or she participates in cheating or disrupts the proper course of the examination, or if, for the purpose of deliberate deception, the intellectual property of others is violated or published material of third parties is used without stating the sources or authorship and submitted as his or her own work (plagiarism), the examination performance in question will be assessed as 'insufficient' (5.0) and the student may be prevented from continuing by the respective examiner. If, for the purpose of deliberate deception, third-party material is used and submitted as the student's own work (plagiarism), the examination in question will be assessed as 'fail' (5.0) and the student may be excluded from continuing with the examination by the respective examiner. In serious cases or in the event of repetition, the responsible examination board will decide on the loss of the right to take the examination.*

The statutes for safeguarding good scientific practice at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg (GWPS BTU) dated March 2, 2018 must be observed by scientists and students.

To check for plagiarism, we use Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software (also for AI detection). You can download the Turnitin software free of charge at https://www.b-tu.de/it-services/basisdienste/software/lizenzvertraege/turnitin to check your work for plagiarism before you submit it.

3.4.3 Standardized procedure for submitting a written paper

- Written work is submitted via Moodle and uploaded to Turnitin for plagiarism checking. Access is provided via Moodle.
- If there is a high level of plagiarism (after a further visual inspection), the thesis is deemed to have failed.
- If the probability of AI is high, the work is also deemed to have failed.

- In exceptional cases, there is an opportunity for revision.
- In serious cases, a report will be made to the examination board/the head of the degree program.

4. Structure of written work

The structure of five types of (scientific) texts that are often used at our institute are presented below: the essay (*Chapter 4.1*), the reflection *(Chapter 4.2*), the exposé (*Chapter 4.3*), the seminar paper and thesis (*Chapter 4.4*) and the review (*Chapter 4.5*).

4.1 Essay

The **essay** is a written work that contains more of your own ideas and evaluations than a seminar paper or thesis and is usually shorter. Due to this personal form of writing, the essay offers more individual expression and design possibilities. A good essay is characterized by an independent argumentation and a recognizable "red thread". The aim is to demonstrate your own knowledge of the topic with a question or a case study.

An essay needs a **question**, a **thesis** and a **plausible argument**. The question (often given by the teacher), thesis (your own) and the appropriate argumentation must therefore be clear before you start writing. To this end, the texts used must be carefully edited. Editing means highlighting the theses that are important for your own argumentation, collecting them and organizing them with a view to your own question. The aim is not to simply reproduce text content, but to critically examine the point of view of the respective authors by comparing and classifying them.

The essay usually contains a short **introduction**, a **main section** with the thesis and its discussion and a **conclusion**. However, there is no magic formula for structuring an essay. Above all, the essay should be coherent.

Introduction: The first sentences of an essay should briefly and concisely express the topic and arouse the reader's curiosity. The introduction briefly and concisely introduces **the question, your thesis and the argumentation** of the text. In the introduction, you should not go into the details of the following argumentation, only the main idea. It is helpful for both writing and reading the text if you provide a brief overview of the main steps of the following argument at the end of the introduction.

Main part: The main part contains the **discussion of your own thesis** based on good **arguments**. To do this, you should reproduce the core statements of the various authors on the question and then analyze and/or refute them in terms of your thesis. The focus is on explaining your own thesis, which should be supported with theoretical arguments and practical/empirical examples. The thesis must be well justified.

Concluding section: The concluding section should briefly **summarize** the central argument and draw a conclusion. Not all arguments are repeated, but condensed and brought to the point. Perspectives for further thematic discussion can be outlined.

The following procedure is recommended when writing the essay:

1. Clearly define the question (if not specified).
2. Search for literature (if not provided) that enables you to answer the question.
3. Derive your own thesis and plausible argumentation from literature.
4. When you look at the relevant literature, ask yourself: What is special about the presentation of the theory/facts/arguments? Is this presentation coherent? How do the arguments differ from those in texts by other authors? Finally, your own thesis should be plausible and informed.
5. Consider and outline the structure for the argumentation of the essay. The essay needs a common thread that guides the reader through the argument in a coherent and understandable way. Even if an essay does not contain chapters but is written as a continuous text, you should structure the essay using paragraphs.
6. It can be helpful to start writing with the main body. You can first structure and explain the core statements before writing the introduction, which should provide an overview of the argument. The following questions can be helpful for the main body: What are the strengths and weaknesses of your arguments? What counterarguments can be found? Which examples support or falsify these arguments?
7. For the introduction, you can think of sentences or examples that introduce the essay succinctly and grab the reader's attention.
8. Finally, you should briefly summarize your argument and draw a clear conclusion. Think about what the reader should take away from your text. The following questions can be helpful for the conclusion: Which questions should be pursued further? What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis?

4.2 Reflection

A **reflection** is not an academic paper, but a written examination of one's own thoughts, learning processes and prior knowledge on a topic or course. The aim is to process and reflect on the content learned. Reflection is often based on questions: e.g. What did you remember

most clearly? Was there anything that surprised you? What was your level of knowledge and assumptions about the topic? What expectations did you have of the topic or the course? Do you still have unanswered questions? A good reflection is therefore much more than just a summary of the content. It includes personal, critical reflection on what you have learned and thus enables a profound examination of the content. In practice, a reflection therefore comprises a mixture of a brief summary of the content and a detailed recording of your own thoughts on it.

The scope of a reflection is not standardized and should be specified by the teachers. Scientific sources can, but do not have to be used in a reflection.

4.3 Exposé

A synopsis is the **formulated outline** of a planned work. The synopsis is therefore written before you start your seminar paper or thesis and also before you have begun the detailed search for material. The basic rule is therefore: the outlined contents of an exposé are never final. Many aspects initially consist only of assumptions. It may turn out that your chosen method does not work as expected or that you change your outline completely. You should discuss with your teacher whether you need to write a synopsis (Bachmann 2019) .

Writing a synopsis - regardless of whether it is required and how long it is - helps you to develop an overview and structure for your planned work at an early stage. You can use it to present the basic key points of your planned work (research questions, theories, method) to your teacher. This allows you to check at an early stage whether the chosen question can be answered with the given material (theories, methods, data), whether a common thread is recognizable in the work and whether a core thesis can be plausibly argued with the available resources. At the same time, writing an exposé is also an important self-assurance about one's own progress and the feasibility of the work project (ibid.).

Later on, an exposé always serves as a roadmap against which you can measure your own progress. A project whose research question, method and timetable cannot be communicated to third parties in an exposé is generally not yet fully developed. Exposés are therefore primarily required for longer written works such as theses or dissertations.

The length of an exposé depends on the length of your planned work. A guideline is approx. 10% of the length of your planned paper (i.e. 3 pages of synopsis for a planned 30-page paper). Before writing a full synopsis, it can be helpful to write a **15-minute synopsis** and share it with your teacher. A 15-minute synopsis is a creative method that helps you to get an initial overview of your project. The 15-minute synopsis, as the name suggests, should only

take about 15 minutes. It is not a comprehensive and perfectly structured piece of work, but rather an outline that can be used for further elaboration. Try to structure your thoughts as follows:

- What is your research question?
- Why is it important (socially and/or scientifically)?
- How do you want to answer the question?
- What could be relevant scientific concepts?
- What kind of results do you expect?

A complete synopsis contains the following points: (1) topic and problem statement, (2) state of research (if already possible), (3) research question and objectives, (4) research design and method, (5) outline (or preliminary outline), (6) timeline, and (7) bibliography.

(1) Topic and problem definition

Every academic project begins with a **topic** and a **problem**. Why you are working on this must be justified. You should therefore first introduce the topic of your thesis. You must then name the problem. This must have social, political or scientific relevance. It can take up new social phenomena, deal with theoretical debates or criticize individual theories, as well as address facts that behave differently than assumed by everyday understanding. This problem must be explained accordingly and, if necessary, the interesting social facts behind it must be worked out.

(2) State of research (if already possible)

By recording the current state of research (i.e. the **state of the literature**) on your topic, you begin to familiarize yourself with the problem and familiarize yourself with the topic . On this basis, and by identifying gaps in the research, you can develop and justify your own research question. The following questions can help you to describe the current state of research: Has the research problem been scientifically investigated before? What is the status of the discussion on your topic in the literature: What are the most important scientific positions in research on the selected topic? What are the deficits and points of criticism of the existing work? Where is there a research gap?

In this section, you should also present the relevant theories, definitions and concepts that you intend to use in your work. Like all parts of the synopsis, this may change during the work process or be supplemented by further concepts and theories.

(3) Research question and objective

As soon as a problem has been identified, it must be transformed **into an analytical question.** This means asking for causes or an interpretation of a development, a fact or a contradiction (how are the facts to be understood?). Questions that merely entail a description are not scientific in the strict sense.

It is important that you also explain the **objective of** your work. While the research question states what you want to find out in your thesis, the objective states the purpose of this knowledge. The objective therefore answers the following questions: What do you want to achieve with the results at the end? What do you want to explain, evaluate or predict with the results? What do you know once you have answered the question? You can also state your hypotheses at this point: To what extent are your results likely to differ from previous research findings? What results do you expect? What will the written work contribute to central questions and the state of research in the scientific discussion?

(4) Research design and method:

Scientific work requires the transparent and controlled application of methods. You should already name these in your exposé. To do this, you should be clear about the following questions: Do you want to collect (your own/secondary) data? If so, what methodology will you use? If you are not collecting your own data: Which literature or data do you want to evaluate/analyze? What methodology do you want to use to analyze/process your own/existing data?

For a detailed description of the methods for data collection and/or data analysis, please refer to the chapter on seminar papers and theses (Chapter 4.4).

(5) Structure (or preliminary structure)

For the synopsis, it is helpful to outline the planned content of your work, i.e. to draft a rough outline of the work. Based on the specific questions and the chosen method, the "red thread" is sketched out, which should already be represented in the preliminary outline. For a detailed description of the structure of an outline, take a look at the chapter on seminar papers and theses (chapter 4.4).

(6) Timetable

For a larger thesis (e.g. Bachelor's or Master's thesis) that extends over a longer period of time, you should include a timetable in your synopsis. This should record and schedule the various work steps up to the submission deadline.

(7) Bibliography

Here you should provide an overview of the sources used as well as thematically relevant literature in the form of a bibliography.

The finished exposé should include the following points:

- Cover sheet - What title should the paper have? Formulate the title as factually and precisely as possible so that it conveys concise information about the content of the paper.
- Introduction to the topic, presentation of the problem and explanation of its relevance
- Presentation of the state of research and clarification of basic definitions/concepts
- Definition of the research question and objective
- Presentation of research design and the planned methodology
- Structure, or preliminary structure of the work
- Timetable, including specific details of the various work steps up to the deadline
- Bibliography (overview of the sources used and thematically relevant literature)

4.4 Seminar papers & theses

Seminar papers, Bachelor's theses and Master's theses differ in terms of their scope, but not in terms of their typical structure. For all three forms, you may be asked to write an exposé (see 4.3). Writing an exposé can be helpful in any case, as you generally carry out the steps outlined in the exposé when writing a seminar paper, Bachelor's or Master's thesis. In contrast to the essay, seminar papers and theses are less based on your own points of view and ideas and are therefore more analytically rigorous. Similar to an exposé, you need a **topic,** a **problem** and a **research question** for seminar papers and theses (detailed information on formulating the topic and problem can be found in *chapter 4.3 - Exposé*).

4.4.1 Development of a research question

The research question is the core of your work: it should develop into the central theme of your work, define its subject matter and provide an indication of the research discussions in which your work is situated. It is important to discuss the research question with the teacher at an early stage.

A scientific question should fulfill the following criteria:

1. It was formulated before the letter was written.
2. It is precisely formulated and posed in one sentence and consists of one question.
3. It is an open question and cannot be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.
4. It is limited to a specific topic.
5. It can be researched within the available time frame.
6. It contains enough complexity to write a whole paper on it (however, the length of the paper depends on the type of work. Check with the supervisor how extensive the paper should be).

4.4.2 Difference between empirical and theoretical work

There are two types of **academic work** that can be considered for seminar papers or theses: theoretical or empirical work. This means nothing other than developing a theory-based (and possibly empirically supported) argumentation that systematically answers a chosen or given question.

Empirical work is used to collect new and original data. You use qualitative or quantitative research methods to extract and analyze primary data from empirical research or practice. For example, you can conduct interviews with experts from the field or surveys. This form is best suited for Master's theses. Considering the given circumstances and requirements, it is important that the research question is clearly defined, the research design has already been determined and the required material/data is either directly available or can be obtained promptly. A Master's thesis offers more scope for empirical research.

A **theoretical paper** or a literature review, on the other hand, does not use primary data collected by the researcher, but addresses the research question on the basis of existing literature. The theoretical paper can take the following forms:

- be an overview of recent studies on a particular theory or issue
- a theoretical review and discussion of a series of empirical results in a specific area
- a critical discussion of a newer (or older) theoretical concept
- a critical discussion of the methods used in serious studies of a particular theory or question.

It is important that the assigned topic offers new insights and is not a mere summary of existing work. It is important to note that theoretical studies place high demands on students' ability to analyze and evaluate theories and/or research results with regard to specific objectives and research questions.

4.4.3 Procedure of the work

The following basic steps are essential for carrying out your work:

1. **Orientation and planning:** finding a topic, formulating a question, initial literature research, determining methodology, time planning, consultation with the teacher, writing a synopsis if necessary
2. **Research, material or data collection:** bibliography, literature procurement, source procurement and analysis, interviews or data collection if necessary
3. **Structuring the material:** arranging, creating references, finding structures, organizing, systematizing
4. **Write the rough draft:** Write down text without checking grammar etc.
5. **Revise:** Addressee reference, style, presentation logic, annotations, bibliography, etc.
6. **Correct:** Correcting errors, layout, etc. - Give the work to a friend, for example, to proofread and check the logical structure. Note: The most important step in writing is reading your own text. You should have read and checked your own work from beginning to end at least three times before submitting it!

4.4.4 Structure of the work

Every seminar paper or thesis consists of **(1) an introduction, (2) the main part** (including the methods section, the results and the discussion) and **(3) the final part.** The rough structure of the thesis is defined in the outline; the fine structure consists of the sequence of thoughts in paragraphs, sentences and formulations. The rough and fine structure together form the central theme of the paper. Even the outline of a paper should clearly show how the topic has been understood and dealt with. A clear, logical, systematic and self-contained line of thought requires a logical sound structure with secondary and sub-points. Chapter 6.2 summarizes the most important aspects to consider when **structuring** and **organizing** your text.

Your outline will change as you write. You therefore do not need to have a finished outline before you start writing. Working on the text and working on the outline usually go hand in hand. Therefore, you should always check the overall course of your argument and, if necessary, shorten anything that is superfluous.

(1) Introduction (accounts for approx. 10% of the work)

In general, it makes sense to only finalize the **introduction** once the thesis has been completed. However, it is advisable to roughly sketch out the introduction, just like the outline, at the beginning of working on the topic and to refine it as the work progresses.

The introduction should include the following points:

- Give an introduction to the topic of the thesis: Background, history, justification of the topicality and relevance of the topic, personal motivation if applicable
- Arouse the reader's attention and curiosity. You should pay particular attention to the first sentence of a term paper. A good introduction can be an anecdote, an example, a news report or a reference to a research gap from which you can lead into your topic.
- Provide classification in a larger framework and reference to the subject area and field of research
- Present the research objective, problem, research question (see research question in the synopsis 4.3) and/or hypothesis(es). The research objective and the significance of the work must be made clear.
- Description of the structure, line of argumentation and methodological approach
- If necessary, provide initial definitions of terms and definitions that are necessary for understanding the topic and the entire paper (definitions that are only important for individual sections should only be explained there)

(2) Main part (accounts for approx. 80% of the work)

In the main part of the thesis, the topic and the question formulated and narrowed down in the introductory section are dealt with systematically and comprehensibly in breadth and depth. The main part consists of the **method**, the **results** and the **discussion**. The following checklists will help you to prepare the main section.

The **methodology** used determines and makes transparent how you conduct your research. With the methodology you use, you decide whether you want to work qualitatively or quantitatively. You should discuss your chosen methods with your teacher at an early stage (e.g. with the synopsis), or you can also ask the teacher for suggestions. The methods section can be written in the past or present tense.

Basically, there are two research steps for which you must apply and explain methods: **(1) data collection and (2) data analysis.** Data collection is not an obligatory part of a scientific paper. It is more suitable for final theses, as you need sufficient prior scientific knowledge. In addition, data collection is usually time-consuming and resource-intensive. In many seminar papers and theses, only data analysis is used. It is important that you explain to what extent the selected method is suitable for dealing with your research question.

(1) The first step of **data collection means empirically** compiling new data. This can include primary surveys (e.g. own surveys or interviews) or secondary surveys (e.g. processing existing data with the help of statistics). If you carry out your own empirical surveys, the choice of method must be justified (in terms of content as well as pragmatically): How do you want to collect your data? Which methods of empirical social research do you use and why are they suitable?

(2) The **data analysis** step can be based on your own data (primary analysis) or existing data (secondary analysis). In a secondary analysis, existing data (e.g. theories, literature, statistics) are re-evaluated based on your research question. If you only analyze theoretical data, your paper is a **theoretical paper**. For this, you should select methods based on the following questions: How will you summarize and discuss the **literature you have collected**? How do you apply or relate the **theoretical approaches** to your object of study?

The method section should include the following points:

- Naming and explanation of all methods used: What scientific methods were used and why? Is the research quantitative or qualitative?
- Explanation of data collection (if you have done/plan to do so): What data did you collect? Why did you choose this data? How did you collect it (methodology)?
- Explanation of the data evaluation: What methods did you use to evaluate and analyze the data? If you worked qualitatively, did you conduct inductive or deductive research?

In the **results and discussion section** of your text, you must address all aspects of your research question. As a general rule, the structure and content of the main section depend heavily on the topic and the question. Therefore, no general rules can be established. However, the argumentation must correspond to a thematically logical sequence and the order should exclude repetitions. It is important that a common thread is recognizable and that you as the author always make references to the research question and the content and arguments presented.

The results and discussion section should include the following points:

- All aspects of the issue must be addressed.
- A clear presentation of phenomena, their causes, correlations and consequences as well as the discussion and, if necessary, clarification of theoretical questions or application-oriented problems is expected. The main part should not simply be a list of facts and figures.

- The arguments, justifications and conclusions must be presented in a comprehensible and verifiable manner.
- Students should work on the topic independently. This also means deriving and formulating your own findings, conclusions and assessments. Your own thesis, your own point of view should be clarified as a possible point of view.
- The work should critically consider the state of the relevant science for the topic.
- Examples help to strengthen the argumentation.

(3) Final part (accounts for approx. 10% of the work)

Each paper should end with a concluding **section/conclusion**.

The final section should include the following points:

- provide a brief summary of the research procedures and results.
- an outlook on what still needs to be investigated, for example further open questions or further perspectives on the topic
- Indications of the limitations and gaps in your own work.
- a good "take-home" message: what readers should take away from the work.

4.5 Review

A **review** can either be a short **overview and analysis** of scientific literature or an **evaluation and assessment** of a single scientific article/paper.

The **review of several scientific articles** is similar to a theoretical seminar paper in a shorter conception (see 4.4). Collected scientific sources are critically analyzed and thematically summarized. The review should not be a mere description and summary of the literature but should analyze and evaluate the sources with regard to a specific research question. The difference to a seminar paper is that the number of sources for the review is smaller or can be limited by the teacher. You can follow the instructions in chapter 4.4 to structure and compile the review.

For an **evaluation and assessment of an individual scientific article/paper**, there are other work steps that are based on the peer review system. In this form of review, you can practise evaluating **the quality and merit** of a research article. In your review, you can critically evaluate a scientific article, highlight positive aspects and describe negative points. The aim is to formulate **recommendations for improving** the article. When giving feedback, you

should make sure that you write empathetically and constructively. You also need basic knowledge about the research topic and academic work in order to evaluate the article according to academic criteria. Chapter 4.4 can help you to understand the structure and objectives of academic papers.

For evaluation and assessment of a single scientific article/paper you should consider the following points:

- Look at **the structure of the article**: are the important parts of a scientific paper present (see 4.4)? Does each section **contain** the most important and correct **content** (e.g. are the research questions and the relevance of the study described in the introduction)?
- Which **method** was used in the research? Does this method fit the research objective and the research question? Does the method fulfill the **quality criteria** of quantitative or qualitative research?
- How are the **results** described and explained? Is the **main part** of the study comprehensible and comprehensive? Are the **research questions** answered? Which aspects of the results do you like and which aspects would you like to criticize?
- Are the **results** discussed in detail and adequately? What do you like about the discussion and which aspects are missing or would you like to criticize?
- What do you like about the article/paper and what do you think is missing? What **improvements** would you like to recommend to the authors? What message do you take away from the article?

5. Language rules

In philosophy and social sciences, writing is the medium of research and knowledge. The **cognitive process** takes place in and during writing, in which you can find out something, learn something and share it with others. This means that your findings can still develop or change in the writing process, even though you have thought through your work argumentatively beforehand.

When writing social science texts, there are certain linguistic rules that should be adhered to. We have compiled a selection of the most important language rules for you below, including a list of formulations to avoid (*Chapter 5.1*) As language is always related to society, language is constantly changing. An example of this is the decision for or against the "first person"

(*chapter 5.2*) and the use of gender- and discrimination-sensitive language (*chapter 5.3*). The correct use of hyphens and dashes (*chapter 5.4*) and numbers (*chapter 5.5*) should also be considered. If you are unclear about language rules or prefer other language rules, talk to your teacher.

5.1 Suitable and unsuitable formulations

Five language rules for a good scientific text:

1. Write as clearly and comprehensibly as possible. To make your thoughts in the text comprehensible to the reader, reproduce your train of thought and argumentation. If you no longer understand your own sentence or thought, rewrite it!
2. Use precise and clear formulations instead of vague and ambiguous ones!
3. Write short sentences (max. 25 words per sentence) instead of long sentences and avoid nested sentences!
4. Explain or define relevant (technical) terms and concepts!
5. Use connecting text elements such as "similar", "also", "likewise", "comparable", "therefore", "against" etc. for a better text flow!

You should avoid using the following terms in your scientific work:

- Formulations with the "one" and/or "we" form
- Filler words like "now" etc.
- Filler sentences that do not convey their own message
- Pseudo-arguments such as "natural", "self-evident" or "readily apparent"
- Exaggerations and generalizations such as "immense", "enormous", "unique", "all" and "always"
- Diffuse qualitative assessments such as "skillful" or "reasonable"
- Vague quantity specifications such as "high", "low", "a lot", "a little" or "large" and "small"
- Restrictive quantity specifications such as "in part", "main influence" or "main obstacle"
- Scare words such as "actually", "probably", "to a certain extent"
- Overall, the use of jargon and colloquial language should be avoided
- Tautologies and pleonasms, i.e. repetition of content through e.g. redundant words or adjectives (e.g. "fully", "dead body"), should be avoided

5.2 First person form

You should consciously decide whether to use the first person in your text and discuss this with your teacher. Some teachers advocate the first person in academic papers; others strictly reject it. To avoid the first person, you can use the following passive formulations, for example:

- "In the present work..."
- "The aim of this work is..."
- "Based on...the following is to be examined ..."
- "...this results in..."
- "...it should be noted that..."
- "...to which must be added/contradicted..."
- "The findings of the present work have shown..."
- "It was made clear..."

5.3 Gender- and discrimination-sensitive language

To counteract exclusionary representation relationships, you should use **gender- and discrimination-sensitive language**. The BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg recommends the use of gender-sensitive language and has published guidelines for this, among other things: https://www.b-tu.de/gleichstellung/aktionsfelder/grundlagen/geschlechtersensible-sprache
To implement **discrimination-sensitive language**, it is important to avoid the use of discriminatory words and colonialist clichés. Instead, you can use political self-designations such as People of Color (PoC, singular: Person of Color). Other options include writing the term *'black'* in capital letters and the term *'white'* in lower case and italics to make it clear that these are neither actual skin colors nor essentialist 'biological' characteristics, but rather socio-political affiliations. You should also comment on and critically categorize quotes that reproduce colonial-racist discourses and terms. Describe facts in a differentiated manner and do not draw conclusions about an entire group.

5.4 Slashes and dashes

There are two different forms of dashes: The **hyphen** (-) is used to separate words at the end of a line, to join words (multi-purpose kitchen machine, Willy-Brandt-Platz) and as a complementary dash (technology and environmental sociology). The **dash** (semiquaver) (−) is longer than the hyphen and is used as a dash ("Suddenly − a tremendous quake!") and to indicate "until" (1990-2020).

5.5 Figures

In the past, the general rule was that numbers from 1 to 12 were written in letters, everything above that as digits. Today, this is no longer true. Instead, we recommend the following rules:

The following are written out numbers:

- Numbers with up to two syllables
- Numbers at the beginning of a sentence
- the so-called ordinal numbers (e.g. *first*, *second*, *third*).

Not to be tendered:

- Annual figures
- Numbers of chapters or illustrations
- Round times from 1 p.m., e.g. *2 p.m.*, not *2 p.m.*
- Numbers before signs or abbreviations of measurements, weights, currency symbols, e.g. *8 €*, 13 cm etc.

6. Formal guidelines

You should take enough time not only to check the spelling and grammar in your finished work, but also to get the formatting right. Think of your first written work in particular as an opportunity to familiarize yourself with your word processing program. There are different elements in your written work for which you must adhere to formal guidelines. These include the cover page (*section 6.1*), the insertion of a declaration of independence (*section 6.2 is only required for final theses*), the design and formatting of the text (*section 6.3*), the correct presentation and embedding of figures and tables (*section 6.4*), footnotes (*section 6.5*) and appendices (*section 6.6*). The following applies to formatting: Decide on a style and use it consistently.

6.1 Cover sheet

The cover page/title page should contain the following information:

- Name of the university, including the name of the faculty/institute
- Module name, semester (winter/summer semester), year
- Module leader/teacher (correct title, with first name)
- Title of the work

- Type of work (seminar paper, essay, reflection, bachelor thesis, etc.)
- Your name, address (street, house no., zip code, town), e-mail address
- Your matriculation number and your degree program
- Place and date of delivery

6.2 Declaration of independence (only required for final theses)

In the **declaration of independence**, you declare that you have written this thesis without outside help or aids and that you have adequately cited all sources used. As a rule, a whole page is inserted between the cover page and the table of contents just for the declaration. Alternatively, this page can be attached as the last page of the paper. You can use the following sentences verbatim or analogously:

- "I hereby declare that I have written this term paper independently and have not used any aids other than those specified."
- "I hereby declare that I have written this term paper independently and have not used any sources other than those stated. The passages in the term paper that have been taken from other sources in terms of wording or meaning are identified by stating their origin. This also applies to drawings, sketches, pictorial representations and sources from the Internet."

This declaration becomes legally binding when you indicate the place and sign it.

6.3 Layout, design of the text

Our institute prefers formatting settings, which we have compiled for you in Table 4.

Table 4: Overview of the preferred formatting settings of our institute

Page setup	
Margins	- left and right 2.5 cm - top and bottom 2.5 cm
Page number	- The pages before the text are to be numbered in Roman numerals (I, II, III, ..); the title page is counted but is not given a page number itself - The Arabic counting system (1, 2, 3, ...) starts at the beginning of the text. It continues until the last page of the work

	- The page is numbered at the bottom of the page, on the right or centered
Structure/headings	
Structure	- Use a decimal point structure. Alternative outlines are possible, but must be used consistently - Only one sub-item may exist for each bullet point, i.e. if 1.1 exists, then 1.2 must also follow - More than three levels of classification become confusing with numerical classification (e.g. 1.2.3.5)
Headings	- The headings should say something about the content (e.g. not: main section) - The headings must match the headings in the table of contents - The wording is informative and yet brief - The headings must be numbered - Within the text section, the headings should be visually emphasized (e.g. italics, bold, larger font)
Continuous text	
Font type and size	- for the text part a serif font such as Times New Roman, alternatively: a font similar to Times New Roman, e.g. Liberation Serif or a standard font without serifs (11 point) such as Arial or Calibri - for the text part 11 or 12 point - for the footnote section 9 or 10 point
Line spacing	- 1.5 lines for the text parts - 1-line for the footnotes
Paragraph	- Heel spacing 6
Set	- Justification - with manual or automatic hyphenation
Bibliography	

Line spacing	- 1-line
Font type and size	- Times New Roman or another font (see font and font size in body text) 11 points
Paragraph	- hanging 1.25 cm

6.4 Figure and tables

Figures and tables can clarify important facts, present results or concepts clearly and also break up the text. This applies to both self-generated and third-party figures and tables. While figures generally belong in the text and not in the appendix, tables should be included in the appendix in some cases. Tables belong in the text if it refers directly to these figures. However, tables should not be too large. Extensive tables should be listed in the appendix (whether they contribute to the number of pages specified by the Lerkraft should be clarified individually beforehand). Each figure or table must be included in the text with an explanation, evaluation or similar and reference made to it (e.g. see Figure 1).
Figures and tables must be numbered consecutively, separately, and labeled to indicate their content. In the case of tables, the caption (the word "Table" or "Figure" with the respective number and caption) is placed above the table and in the case of figures, this information is placed below. The references for tables and figures follow the same rules that apply to text passages and must be indicated in the caption (see chapter 3).

If you use many figures or tables, it may be useful to create a list of figures or tables. In the list of figures or tables, all figures or tables used are listed with figure number, caption and page number. The order of the figures is the same as in your paper, starting with 'Figure 1'. The list of figures or tables is either placed directly after the table of contents at the beginning of the thesis or at the end of the thesis after the bibliography.

6.5 Footnotes

Footnotes are used alongside the literature sources for additional references that would interfere with the argumentation of the continuous text. In a scientific paper, footnotes can be used in the following cases:

- to reproduce translated verbatim quotations in the original language
- to refer to further studies
- to briefly address aspects that are not central but could be of additional interest

Footnotes are usually placed below the corresponding page of text. However, they can also be formatted as endnotes. Whether they count towards the number of pages specified for the thesis should be determined beforehand. A footnote symbol is a reference in the text to the respective footnote at the bottom of the page or to the endnote.

The following rules apply to the implementation of footnotes:

- Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the work
- Footnotes begin with the superscript number of the corresponding footnote
- The footnote text is regarded as a sentence and therefore begins with a capital letter and usually ends with a period
- Footnotes have a single line spacing and 1-2 points smaller font than in the text (approx. 9 to 10 points)
- Footnotes should be placed as completely as possible on the corresponding text page and should not extend over several pages

6.6 Appendices

Extensive material such as statistics, interview transcripts, interview guidelines, tables etc. can be included as **an appendix**. Only documents that have not already appeared in the body text are included in the appendix. The contents of the appendix are not absolutely necessary for the general understanding of the work; their integration into the text would restrict the clarity of the work. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make reference to each appendix at least once in the text.

The appendix immediately follows the bibliography. If a paper contains several appendices, these should be labeled differently (Appendix 1: Interview transcripts, Appendix 2, etc.). Appendices are included in the table of contents. If your appendix is particularly extensive, it is advisable to create an additional list of appendices.

7. Checklist

Before you start writing your paper, you can clarify the following questions with your teacher:

- By when must the work be submitted?
- How many pages should the paper have (minimum/maximum number)?
- Is the topic/question of the paper predetermined, or should it be developed by the student him/herself?
- Are there any special literature suggestions from the teacher that should be considered?
- What is the overall performance required? What skills should be documented with the term paper?
- Is it possible to view a piece of work that your teacher considers to be a particularly good example of academic work?
- What does the teacher look for when reviewing your text? What do they not accept? What does she attach particular importance to?
- Does the teacher have a strong position on the use of the "I-form" in academic papers?
- For extensive work: How will the work be supervised? Is there the possibility of interim agreements, feedback on text samples, etc.?

Sources used

- Are your sources relevant and citable?
- Have you cited the main arguments from your sources?
- Have you embedded all quotations well in the text so that it is clear why you are using this quotation at this point?
- Have you decided on a citation style and used it consistently in the text?
- Have you cited all (direct and indirect) quotations with sources and included them in the bibliography?

Structure

- Check whether your central research question is the common thread running through your work. Have you drawn a conclusion and answered your research question?
- Check the stringency of the individual chapters or paragraphs based on your research question: Why is this chapter/paragraph necessary to answer it? Is the (partial) answer clear?
- Does the work have a comprehensible structure and outline?

- For seminar papers or theses: Is the overview you give in the introduction consistent with the main body? Do you summarize the main steps in the conclusion? Do these correspond to what you promised at the beginning?

Linguistic rules

- Read the paper several times for grammatical and spelling errors and also use the spell check function of your word processing program.
- Also check capitalization, dashes, hyphens and commas.
- Check that you are using technical terms correctly.
- Check whether the variant of gender- and discrimination-sensitive language you have chosen is used consistently.

Formal guidelines

- Have you clarified the formal criteria with the teacher?
- Align the table of contents with the chapter headings (some word processing programs do not update this automatically).
- Check that all relevant information is on the cover sheet.
- Check the formatting of your work (page numbers, line spacing, font size, etc.).
- Check that all tables and figures are well integrated into the text. If you have a large number of tables or figures, consider creating a list of tables or figures.
- Check whether the footnotes are numbered correctly (be sure to use the automatic footnote function of your writing program).
- If you have referred to appendices in the text, check whether these have been inserted correctly in the work.

8. Bibliography

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Further recommendations on the topic:

Theisen, Manuel René. 2008. *scientific work, technology-methodology-form*. 15th edition. Munich: Vahlen

Stickel-Wolf, C., & Wolf, J. 2009. Scientific work and learning techniques. 8th edition. Wiesbaden: Gabler.