

10 Fundamental Thesis Preparation Tips

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Tip Number 5 – Let the Results Speak for Themselves

A common shortcoming in graduate theses is that research students tend to try and sell or promote their research outcomes. This is not the role of a humble/impartial investigator conducting an apprenticeship for research in the form of a higher degree.

Denigrating the work of other researchers in a thesis – by selective or biased comparison – is the same as self-promotion. It endeavors to place the thesis author's work above others.

A basic rule of thesis writing is that the hard results/evidence should be able to speak for themselves and the thesis examiner should be able to extract the benefits from comparative evidence without the thesis author hard-selling them.

In order to provide an examiner with the clearest possible evidence of the strengths of the research, a student should juxtapose the best possible interpretation of the work of others against the worst possible interpretation of his/her own work. Further, even if the worst interpretation of one's own work appears better than the best interpretation of others, a research student still has an obligation to identify possible shortcomings/errors or irregularities that might have led to the apparently favorable outcomes.

In simple terms, a research student should write his/her thesis with a Socratic mind – challenging his/her own work in the same way that one would expect an examiner to challenge it.

Finally, from an examiner's perspective, the personal opinions of the author of the thesis carry little or no weight, since the author is not deemed to be an expert in the field and because the author is presenting a particular course of action. In summary, let the results do the talking and give the examiner credit for having the intelligence to interpret them without a sales-pitch.