

Setting and achieving your PhD writing goals

Dr Cherie Todd-Williamson (c.todd@massey.ac.nz)
Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL)

In pairs, discuss ...

- What does setting and achieving your goals involve?
- What are some of the goals you have set for yourself (or want to set for yourself)?

SMART writing goals

- **S = Specific** (who, what, when, where, which, why)
 - **M = Measurable** (how you measure your progress)
 - **A = Achievable** (what you do to make your goals attainable)
 - **R = Relevant** (how a goal fits into the bigger picture)
 - **T = Time bound** (realistic deadlines for short and long term goals)
- **Are you already setting SMART writing goals?**

Setting goals is easy!

But achieving them requires more

12 tips to help you achieve your goals

Tip #1: Write down all your goals

- Writing them down means that you don't have to use up so much energy & brain power trying to **remember** to do them!



a. Set a deadline

Submit my completed (high quality & polished)
dissertation by July 2022.



b. Set a yearly goal

One Year: 12 months / 365 days / 7,760 hours

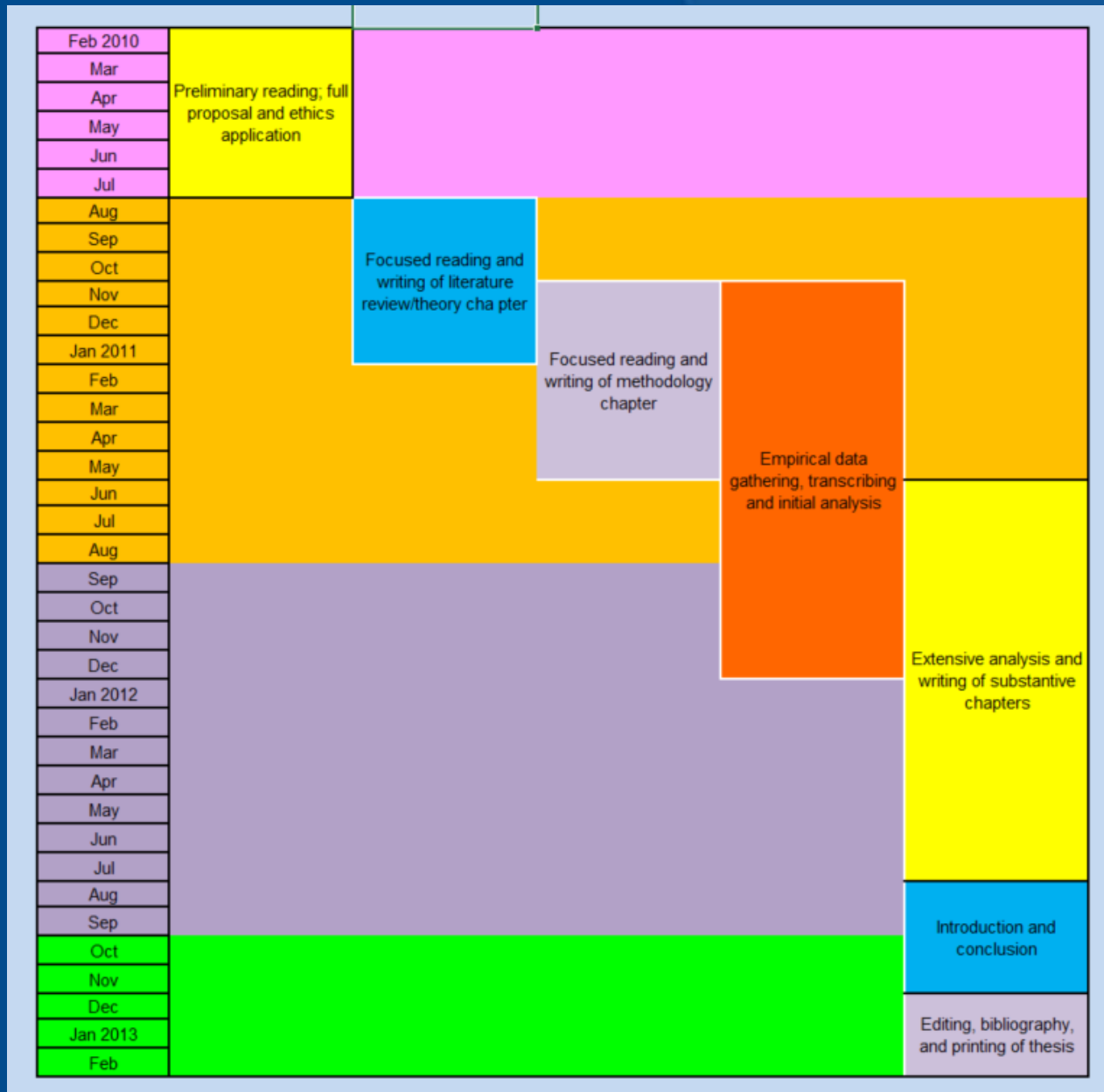
If you write 1 hour a day for 300 days

2 paragraphs (350) per hour

= 105,000 words per year

In total, this equates to just 3.42% of your time in one year.

C. Using Gantt Charts to see the big picture



d. Set monthly goals

Date	Task	Status
April 2019	Complete first draft of Lit. Review chapter	✓
May 2019	Start writing Methodology chapter, and begin stage 1 of data gathering	✓
Mid-May 2019	Conduct analysis of data and create a corresponding set of codes for organising findings/results	✓
May-June 2019	Review Methodology chapter and begin writing up draft Results chapter	✓

Tip #2: Use Lists

Day	Time	Topic	Target word count	Status
Monday	10am-1pm	Lit Review discussion: Compare and contrast of prominent theorist's work	500 - 1500	
Tuesday	4 - 7pm	Review chapter feedback from supervisors and revise writing	N/A	
Wednesday	ALL DAY	Family day 😊	Zero!	😊😊😊😊
Thursday	10am-2pm	Continue writing Lit. Review	500 - 1500	

If word counts don't work for you, try number of paragraphs
Start the day with a realistic goal for what you want to achieve

a. Plan your days: 'To Do' lists

- Have a 'To do' list



- Have a 'Do not do' list



**b. Lists for each day, the week, the month,
or just whenever**

Things to do

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat & Sun

This month

Eventually

Tip #3: Make it a habit to review

- **Your daily goals (every morning)**
 - At the start of the day review your 'to do' list
 - New day = new ideas. Make changes accordingly
- **Your monthly goals**
 - Are they still achievable and realistic?
- **Your progress line towards completion (reflect)**
 - Are you making progress? Is it consistent?
 - If not, is there anything you can do to improve your rate of progression?

Always have your goals somewhere you can see them everyday

How do you rate your own time management?

1

2

3

4

5

Abysmal
Fantastic



Activity:

Time Management Quiz

In pairs, **ask each other** the time management questions and calculate your scores

Results...

- What are your main strengths?
- What do you need to work on?

Tip #4: Set triggers

- Before I, I'll write paragraphs on
- After I, I'll write paragraphs on

Triggers can also be rewards = Good for combating procrastination

Tip #5: Block out writing hours

- Necessary for immersing yourself in ‘deep work’ = 3 key features:

Preparedness



Environment



Mind



a. Preparedness: Reading & notetaking

- What if you're still reading and not ready to write?

Using a Literature Review Matrix

Citations	Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework	Research Question(s)/ Hypotheses	Methodology	Analysis & Results	Conclusions	Implications for Future Research	Implications for Practice
Article 1							
Article 2							
Article 3							

Walden University Writing Center (2010). *Literature review matrix template*. Retrieved October 21, 2015 at http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/Documents/Scholarly-Writing/Literature_Review_Matrix_Template.doc.

Also see: "Using a matrix to organise your notes". Link via the Thesis Whisperer: <https://sites.google.com/site/twblacklinemasters/using-a-matrix-to-organise-your-notes-for-faster-writing>

Online tutorial: "Reading, note-taking and how to use a literature matrix"
<https://rise.articulate.com/share/GgWdJViNOVWt-3Th6LRMDHVJhwo1XVKc>

- Download literature matrix templates

Tracking multiple sources & relevant information

Themes/Topics	Sources
<p>Online gaming culture Highly relevant</p>	Yee 2009, 2014; Bertozzi and Lee 2007; Kolhatkar 2014; Wakeford 1997; Turton-Turner 2013; Featherstone and Burrows 1995; Schott and Thomas 2008; Shaw and Warf 2009, 2011;
Related (but less relevant)	Ash 2013; Pile 2010; Pain 1991; Juul 2012; Lee and Hoadley 2006; Janz and Martis 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Brenick et al. 2007;
<p>Feminist theory/research Highly relevant</p>	Pain and Smith 2008; Valentine 1989; Dumitrica and Gaden 2009; Boellstorff 2008; Turkle 1995; Wajcman 2004; Grosz 1994; Gatens 1996; Haraway 1991; Longhurst 2005, 2009; Parr 2002; Bingham 2005; Del Casino 2009; Shapiro 2010; Butler 1990, 1991, 1993; Wajcman 2004; Sunden 2009; Johnston et al. 2000; Johnston and Longhurst 2008; Brown et al. 2009; McDowell 1997;
Related (but less relevant)	Eklund 2011; Huh and William 2010; Bell et al. 2001; Holloway and Valentine 2001; Del Casino and Brooks 2014; Pulos 2013; Hubbard 2009; Fortim and de Moura Grando 2013;
<p>Digital/virtual geographies Highly relevant</p>	Crang et al 1999; Valentine 2001; Warf 2005; Dodge and Kitchin 2009; Kinsley 2013a; Hillis 1999; Del Casino 2009; Shaw and Warf 2009, 2011; Hubbard et al. 2005; Damasio 2005; Gatens 1996; Bell et al. 2001; Madge and O'Connor 2005; Holloway and Valentine 2001;
Related (but less relevant)	Kwan 2002; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Meadows 2007;
<p>Methodologies Online research methods</p>	<u>Madge and O'Connor 2005</u> ; Rose 2001, 2012; Madge et al. 2004; Gibbons and Nuttal 2012; Hine 2005; Spencer 2009;
Feminist research approach	Shurmer-Smith 2002; Moss 2002; Holloway 1997; Valentine 1999; Cupples 2003; Johnston 2013; Rose 2001, 2007, 2008;
Autoethnography	Butz 2010; Brown 2012b; Ali 2014; Besio 2005; Cook 2005a & b; Ellis 2011; Jones and Watt 2010;

Online tutorial: "How to keep track of your literature searches"

<https://rise.articulate.com/share/v7idK-JCygc3WoSEBO5rnu5iplFVCQBR>

Tip #6: Things to avoid while involved in deep work

- **Random distractions**
 - Multimedia, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.
 - Silence your phone / Turn off email notifications
- **Perfectionism** (especially when writing your first draft)
 - Look at the expectations you have of yourself and make allowances for imperfection in your writing.
- **Multi-tasking**
 - There is a time and a place for it BUT that doesn't include deep work
- **Unfocused writing tasks**
 - Always have a plan for your writing time (e.g. which chapter? How many paragraphs/words?)

Tip #7: Create a writing ritual

- **Repetition**
 - Is 'key' to creating a writing habit, and...
 - The more you do it, the more you gain in confidence in your ability as a writer. This then creates...
- **Momentum**
 - Means achieving steady progress.
 - Leads to the development of making a new writing ritual, and...
- **Seeing yourself as a writer**
 - Your own self-image can affect the quality of your work.
 - Ask yourself, "do I see myself as a writer?"

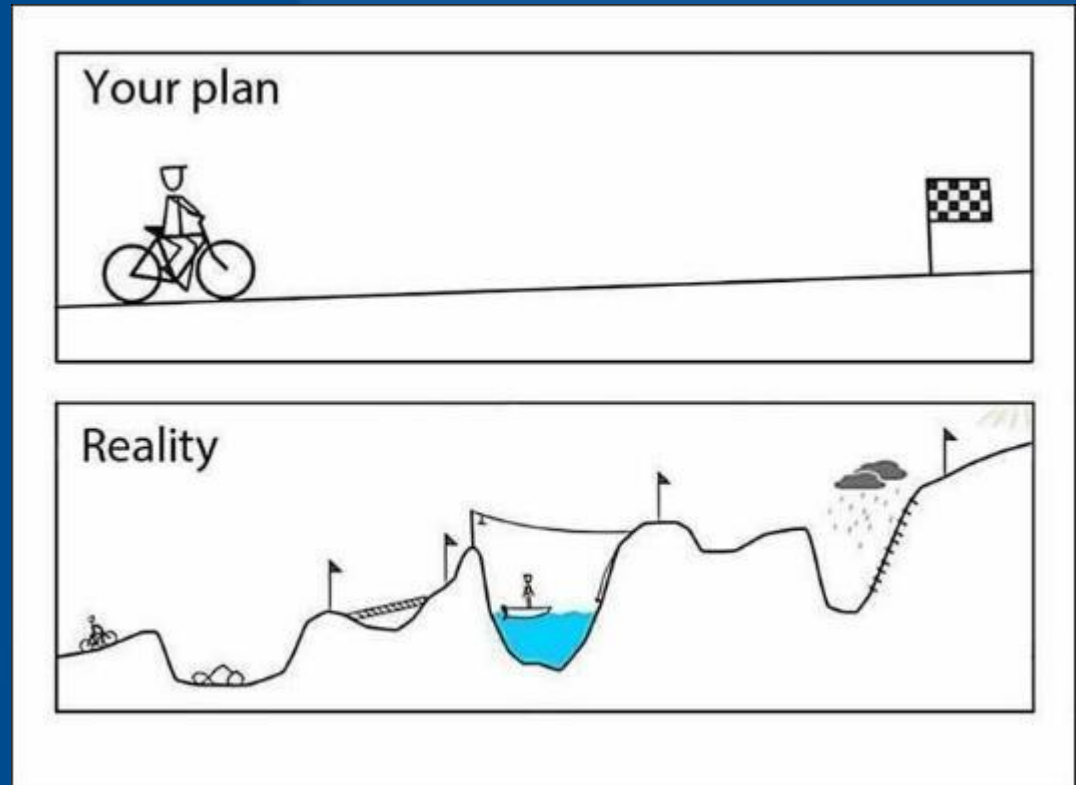
In pairs or groups...

- Where do you usually write? (describe)
 - How do you find it for writing
- What time of the day suits you best for writing?
- How do you minimise disruptions during your writing time?

Tip #8: Be patient

Cultivating a new habit takes time!

Reward yourself for your progress!



Tip #9: Don't wait

Do NOT wait for:

- Motivation to kick in
- The 'right mood'
- The 'right time'

Motivation follows work, not the other way around.

Take the first step and motivation will kick in...

Tip #10: Writing groups & bootcamps

- Help to motivate you to write
- Keep you accountable
- Can be great for producing large amounts of written work
- Great for meeting other PhDs and postgraduates
- Receiving feedback on your writing

Tip #11: Take planned breaks

To reduce mental fatigue, take planned breaks:

- During your block writing time (e.g. pomodoro technique)
- Weekly (R & R)
- Monthly (R & R)



Tip #12: Use apps to help you to write

Focus Me – mac/windows (paid), free on android:

<https://focusme.com/>

StayFocusd – free Google Chrome extension:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/stayfocusd/laankejkbhbdhmipfmgcngdelahlfoji?hl=en>

LeechBlock – free Firefox & Chrome extension:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/leechblock-ng/blaaajhemilngeeffpbfkdjjoefldkok>

SelfControl – free Mac application:

<https://selfcontrolapp.com/>

Goal setting 'rules of thumb':

- Separate your academic goals from your personal goals
- Depending on your context, try:
 - Have fewer goals in life, or
 - Set goals that challenge you that take you out of your comfort zone
- Create goals that you are truly passionate about

Next workshop: “Writing the confirmation report”

Covers:

- Brief review of PhD confirmation process
- Writing the confirmation report: Looking at the structure and style

When:

Wednesday 15 April 2020, 12.30 – 2pm

Locations:

VLT rooms – PN (GLB1.14), Albany (AT4 – Atrium Building),
Wellington (5C17)

Live streaming access:

Contact Cherie (c.todd@massey.ac.nz) to request the URL.

Useful links

Massey's Doctoral Research Student webpage –

(where you can find all of the resources from these and other sessions from 2017 & 2018):

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm>

What does academic work look like?

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2019/03/27/call-for-participation-in-a-study-of-academic-work/>

Writing groups: Shut up and write!

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/shut-up-and-write/>