



**Graduate School**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Guide to Preparing your Doctoral Dissertation

Read these guidelines before you start writing—they ensure your dissertation meets Graduate School and digital accessibility standards.

## Beginning notes

- Ensure the PDF of your dissertation is completely accurate before you submit it. After you submit it, you will not be allowed to make any corrections.
- Your dissertation must be **complete, corrected, and submitted as one PDF file**.
- Formatting must be **consistent throughout**, except for the Appendix. In the Appendix, published articles can stay in their original format.
- If you include published work in a chapter, it must follow the Graduate School's formatting rules.
- Acknowledge contributions from others (e.g., co-authors of published material included in the document, those who helped with writing, proofing, or copyediting the manuscript) in an acknowledgements section or at the beginning of relevant chapters.

**Accessing links if you printed this checklist:** The links in this document are also available at [grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide](https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide) under “Guide to Preparing your Doctoral Dissertation”.

# Formatting requirements

## Accessible digital documents

Completed dissertations must meet accessibility standards so everyone can access these works quickly, easily, and independently. As you create graphics, write, and format your dissertation, pay attention to the digital accessibility fundamentals (<https://it.wisc.edu/learn/make-it-accessible/fundamentals/>) and follow the document accessibility guide (<https://it.wisc.edu/learn/make-it-accessible/documents/>).

- ☐ Use titles and headings that are properly ordered.
- ☐ Use alt text and image descriptions. For complex images like graphics or charts, incorporate a long description into a caption or nearby text in your document.
- ☐ Use proper color contrast and text labels so that color is not the sole method of conveying information.
- ☐ Use table structure appropriately when presenting data.
- ☐ Pick text styling that makes your content easier to read and understand.

## Using Microsoft Word

Use Microsoft Word's built-in accessibility checker to fix any accessibility issues before you convert your dissertation to a PDF. Use "export to PDF" (on Windows) or "save as PDF" (on Mac) rather than printing as a PDF.

## Using LaTeX

LaTeX alone does not create an accessible PDF, but additional tools like PreTeXt or LaTeX extension packages can help. See the UW–Madison Libraries' guide on Accessibility & LaTeX (<https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/latex/accessibility>) and the Michigan State University Libraries page on Creating Accessible LaTeX Documents (<https://libguides.lib.msu.edu/c.php?g=995742&p=8207771>).

## **Abstract**

### **UMI abstract**

When you deposit your dissertation electronically, ProQuest/UMI will require you to provide the text of your UMI abstract. Please have this text ready when you begin the online submission process. The abstract must be in English and should preferably be no more than 350 words. When your advisor signs the warrant, they approve the dissertation and the abstract.

### **Abstract within dissertation**

Your program may require an abstract to be part of the dissertation. Please follow your program's style requirements, and number all of these pages as part of the preliminary material (use lower case Roman numerals). This abstract must be included in the table of contents.

## **Appendices**

- ☐ Put any supplementary materials (e.g., questionnaires, photos) into appendices.
- ☐ Number them consecutively with the text of the dissertation.
- ☐ Formatting must meet dissertation standards, however, they can be single-spaced.

## **Bibliography**

The bibliography should meet your major program's style requirements. They may be single-spaced with an additional space between entries.

## **Equations, superscripts, and subscripts**

- ☐ Superscripts and subscripts may be one size smaller than the text.
- ☐ Isolate each equation with double spacing.

## **Footnotes and endnotes**

- ☐ Footnotes and endnotes may be single-spaced with an extra space between notes.
- ☐ The font size can be one size smaller, but it must be legible.
- ☐ Follow your program's preferences when deciding where footnotes or endnotes should be placed.

## Foreign language use

You can include quotations in languages other than English in your dissertation. However, the dissertation itself must be in English unless your program confirms one or both of these conditions are met:

- the foreign language is the language of your intended readers, **or**
- translating into English could make your work unclear or inaccurate.

If you are in a foreign language department, you may submit your dissertation in that language.

## Graphics

- ☐ Maps, charts, etc. are acceptable.
- ☐ Figures and graphs must meet dissertation standards.
- ☐ Headings, keys, and all other identifying information must be of the same quality and format as the text.
- ☐ The font size can be one size smaller, but it must be legible.
- ☐ If graphics are in landscape mode, follow these instructions for page orientation and numbering:  
[https://grad.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/329/2023/04/etd-page\\_numbers\\_landscape\\_to\\_portrait.pdf](https://grad.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/329/2023/04/etd-page_numbers_landscape_to_portrait.pdf)
- ☐ Images may be submitted in black and white or color.

## Margins

- ☐ Use a minimum of 1" margin on all four sides.
- ☐ Page numbers must be in the upper right-hand corner at least a half inch from the top and one inch from the side of the page.
- ☐ Page headers: Do NOT use page headers (except for page numbers) or decorative borders.

## Page numbering

- ☐ **Title page and copyright page:** Do not number these pages.

- ❑ **Preliminary pages** (dedication, acknowledgments, table of contents, abstract): Use lower case Roman numerals (beginning with i) in the upper right corner, 1 inch from the top and side of the page.
- ❑ **Main text:** Start with Arabic numeral 1 in the same position as preliminary pages. Number pages in order and make sure none are missing.
- ❑ **Appendices:** Continue numbering with Arabic numerals.

Find directions about how to start page numbering later in your document:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/start-page-numbering-later-in-your-document-c73e3d55-d722-4bd0-886e-0b0bd0eb3f02>

Landscaped pages:

- Page numbers must appear in **portrait position** (same direction as other pages).
- If using Microsoft Word, create **section breaks**, then rotate page numbers using the Header & Footer Tools. Download instructions and visual examples:  
[https://grad.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/329/2023/04/etd-page\\_numbers\\_landscape\\_to\\_portrait.pdf](https://grad.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/329/2023/04/etd-page_numbers_landscape_to_portrait.pdf).
  - Note that if you do not rotate the landscaped pages, you want page numbers to appear in the same position as the highlighted number 3 in the second row of examples.

## Production of document

- ❑ Use at least 12 point type.
- ❑ Double-space the main text of the dissertation.
- ❑ Lengthy quotations, footnotes, and bibliographies may be single-spaced with a double space between entries or paragraphs.

## Reprints and use of copyrighted material

You are responsible for the appropriate use of copyrighted materials

(<https://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#107>) in your dissertation. Some material may be available for use without restriction, while others may require written permission from the rights holder. General guidance is available from the UW–Madison Libraries: <https://www.library.wisc.edu/research-support/scholarly-communication/copyright-resources/>

## **Title page**

Two sections of information that must appear on the dissertation title page: Dissertation title and Defense and committee information.

### **Dissertation title and degree information**

- All text is vertically and horizontally centered
- All text is double-spaced
- Text includes the following information:
  - Title, followed by additional space
  - One line of text with the word “By”
  - One line of text with your name, followed by additional space
  - One line of text reading “A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of”
  - One line of text reading “the requirements for the degree of”
  - One line of text reading “Doctor of Philosophy”
  - The program in which your degree will be granted (e.g., Geography, surrounded by parentheses).
  - One line of text reading “at the”
  - One line of text reading “University of Wisconsin–Madison” (use all capital letters)
  - The year your degree will be granted

### **Dissertation defense and committee information**

- Text is left-aligned
- One line of text reading “Date of final oral examination:”, followed by a tab space and the date in MM/DD/YYYY format.
- A paragraph space before additional copy.
- One line of text reading “The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:”

- One line for each committee member's name. List their name, professorial title, and academic department. Note: Each committee member's name must be indented from the left of the page.

If you are depositing your thesis in the window period, your title page should reflect the year in which your degree will be granted.

Download a sample copyright page on the Graduate School's Guide to Preparing your Doctoral Dissertation (<https://grad.wisc.edu/academics/doctoral-guide/#dissertation-guide>), under "Formatting requirements" and "Copyright page (optional)".

## **Copyright page (optional)**

Copyright pages are optional and, if used, should be included after the title page. If you include a copyright page, you will retain the copyright as the document's author; you do not need to separately register for copyright.

Do not number the copyright page. Include the following text and center it in the bottom third of the page within the dissertation margins:

- On the first line, include the copyright symbol and "Copyright by" followed by your name and the year the university officially awards your degree
- On the second line, include "All Rights Reserved"

Download a sample copyright page on the Graduate School's Guide to Preparing your Doctoral Dissertation (<https://grad.wisc.edu/academics/doctoral-guide/#dissertation-guide>), under "Formatting requirements" and "Copyright page (optional)".

## **Registration of copyright (optional)**

You can also get help from the U.S. Copyright Office (<https://www.copyright.gov/>) and the UW–Madison Libraries (<https://www.library.wisc.edu/research-support/scholarly-communication/copyright-resources/>).

Your dissertation is automatically protected by copyright law—you do not have to pay anything to keep the copyright.

If you want to register your copyright, you'll need to pay a \$75 fee for registering your copyright to ProQuest/UMI at the time of electronic submission.

Registration makes your copyright a public record, and ProQuest/UMI will send a copy of your dissertation to the Library of Congress.