

Thesis Writing: Work breakdown structure

In this example, we can see an overarching project goal to write a thesis and how it's broken down into its deliverables. In this case, the deliverables are the thesis sections:

- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

We can also break down the deliverables into work packages. We'll go through this work break down structure graphic to help explain each of the important components.

For the introduction deliverable, there is a single work package that contains five tasks:

1. Write abstract.
2. write keywords.
3. Write the first broad sentences of the introduction.
4. Write the discussion of past research.
5. Write about the present study.

For the methods deliverable, there's a single work package containing three tasks:

1. Write about participants.
2. Write about measures.
3. Write about procedures.

For the results deliverable there's a single work package containing two tasks:

1. Present the results of the study.
2. Create the figures, tables and graphs that correspond to the results.

For the discussion deliverable, there is a single work package containing three tasks:

3. Summarize results, add relevant literature, review.
4. Write the discussion about the results.

For the conclusion deliverable, there are two work packages. The first is to write the conclusion and contains three tasks:

1. Summarize the introduction.
2. Summarize the key aspects of the methods.
3. Summarize the discussion.

The second work package is to write the Limitations and Future Directions section, which contains two tasks:

1. One to write the Limitations section,
2. and one to write the Future Direction section.



You may notice that this thesis structure may not exactly look like how your thesis is laid out as this is highly dependent on the subject matter of your thesis. However, this visually shows us an example of the scope of a project and what the work breakdown structure could look like for your specific thesis.

For all work break down structures, the project scope encompasses all the project requirements. Anything that is not defined as part of the project scope is considered out of scope and is not connected to the project's success. Any task considered within scope is shown inside of the work break down structure box and any task considered out of scope is shown outside of the box. Writing down the tasks that you anticipate might come up or that do come up that are out of scope is important. This means you can plan for how to handle out of scope tasks to alleviate stress later in the project. You could and probably should even decide that some project aspects are out of scope for now but could be revisited later. For example, an infographic you thought about creating for your recent publication or an additional experiment related to your research. In our example, proofreading your friend's thesis grading student finals as part of your teaching assistant contract and mentoring an undergraduate thesis may seem related to writing your own thesis or your role as a graduate student, but ultimately, they are not required for your goals success, although they may still need to be completed and you may need to allocate and budget time for them.

