

The Research Room

November 2023

Tips of the month

Here are some tips and tricks you can use to make your research experience at VUW much more productive and enjoyable

Have you ever used the 'SQ3R' technique? The SQ3R technique, which stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review, is a powerful method for effective reading and comprehension.

How to use it: Start by surveying the text (quickly scanning the material to get an overview of its structure and key headings). Next, formulate questions about the content, which helps to set a purpose for your reading and keeps you actively engaged. As you read, pay close attention to the answers to your questions and underline or take notes on important points. After each section, recite what you have just learned in your own words to reinforce your understanding. Finally, review the entire text, focusing on your notes and the key concepts.

The SQ3R technique not only enhances comprehension but also promotes a more organized and efficient approach to reading complex texts (Find more info [here](#))

Dr. William Eulath – FGR, VUW

Going Green: Using our Open Access Institutional Repository (Reminder). [Open Access publishing](#) has many benefits beyond increased citation rates. By removing barriers like cost, you can make your work freely available to a wider, more diverse audience, including researchers and students in marginalised communities.

At Te Pātaka Kōrero – The Library, we have several options to make your work open, including our [Open Access Institutional Repository](#). This is known as [Green Open Access](#): there is no cost associated with putting your work in our Repository. However, there is often an embargo period, set by the journal. You can use [Sherpa Romeo](#) to determine your journal's embargo period.

As PhD students, you can make your work available in our Repository via your Elements account. Follow the step-by-step guide to deposit any of the following items into our Repository: chapters, conference papers, journal articles, reports, and theses. The Repository is open to the public, and anyone who is interested may access, read, and download your work.

One final tip to help you to go Green: remember to self-archive. It's important to maintain a clear record of your work as you go through the research lifecycle. This is especially vital if you are a co-author, and not the corresponding author. At the end of the publishing process, you should have three distinct versions: pre-print (author submitted, not peer reviewed), post-print (author accepted, peer reviewed), and published (as appears in print).

If you have any queries about work in our Repository, or about depositing/using items, please contact your Subject Librarian.

Library Research Services Team – Te Pātaka Kōrero, The Library, VUW

Share your story

When utilized effectively, stories can be powerful tools to motivate and change minds. If you need an extra dose of motivation, this story should help you out

My PhD Journey: Reflections and tips I learned along the way – Brittany

I started my PhD journey in 2017 and have successfully defended this October, six years later. I joke with students that if they are worried about ‘taking too long’, I’ve got one of the records!

In my PhD office is the picture I was given at PG orientation of many different characters in different parts of a rollercoaster. Some of the characters are enjoying the thrills and riding high, some are screaming terrified as they go down the big dips, some are zooming along, others are pushing their vehicle laboriously up the incline, some are out of the car, clinging on to the frame of the rollercoaster just barely staying on the coaster itself. I feel this picture is a pretty good description of the different parts of my PhD journey. There were times within my journey where I had to leave the car, and just hang on, take a suspension and focus on myself and my family. There were some parts of the PhD process where I just had to ‘keep swimming’ and not worry about where I was in my timeline or compare my progress to others. But there was light at the end of the tunnel, and I did make it to the end.

Here are some of the strategies that helped me get to the end. I hope they might be helpful to others along their own journey!

Embracing the journey as a journey, not a destination.

Many times throughout my thesis I wasn’t sure why I was present for certain events or why I was writing certain sections or how they would fit into my overall thesis, but by the end, many of the conversations, conference presentations, and writing sessions I participated in influenced my final output. How to embrace the journey and pick up gems of knowledge wherever you find yourself?

- ✓ Go to conferences. Get excited about your topic, get inspired about other people’s work in your field, talk about your work and remind yourself of what you set out to do and why it is important.
- ✓ Talk to people about your research. Every time you talk to people about your research topic, you are clarifying for yourself what you are doing and what the ‘story’ of your research is. This will make it

easier to put on paper! Sometimes it can also give you a new perspective for your writing or analysis.

- ✓ Write. Even if you don’t know where the writing will go, write whatever you are learning about, excited about, reading about. This all becomes a mine that you can resource from later.
- ✓ Do stuff related to your research, even if there is not a clear purpose. This might be engaging in community events or going to cultural events, seminars, or fundraisers around some aspect related to your research. These can be inspiring and sometimes you make connections you wouldn’t have thought to pursue otherwise.

Getting started after breaks. My thesis journey included times where I had to focus on managing other aspects of life and needed to take a break from my thesis. Here are some of the useful strategies I found to get started after a break.

- ✓ Reacquaint yourself with your thesis. Read through what you have without a clear agenda or purpose. If you find an area you are excited about, or find you have something to say, start there. If not, just read through and leave it open on your desktop for the next time you have a date.
- ✓ Date your thesis. Have a specific day and time where you are only going to concentrate on your writing. Make it fun! Try new spots around town that you have always wanted to try. I began telling myself that if I was taking my thesis out, I could budget coffees or lunch dates with my thesis as part of my overall school fees 😊.
- ✓ Garden your thesis. This is analogy I used as I reacquainted myself with my thesis. Gardening a huge patch can feel insurmountable. Similarly, knowing where to start on my writing, which section to write, or which section to edit, seemed huge. I started to think of myself walking through, seeing which areas might take more extensive weeding, preparing the ground, and planting, which areas were ready to be planted already, which areas I could transplant writing I’d already done into, which areas needed extensive weeding and, as I went through and found a stray word, or long sentence, I could weed easily while I was there. This helped me think about editing, organizing and writing with less

pressure and allowed me to develop a plan for the upcoming weeks/months.

Having compassion for self. A friend of mine just gave me an acronym which applies well to the practice I discovered I needed to take during my thesis journey. The acronym is CRC. It stands for Curious, Respect, Compassion.

- ✓ Be Curious: If I was stuck and was finding it hard to write (often!), I learned that rather than trying to force myself, a strategy that helped was to be curious. What was it that I didn't want to do? Why? Was there something that particularly scared me about writing this section? Was there a story underneath this section that I had to write before I could write what I wanted to go into my thesis? Sometimes for my writing days, I had to take the first hour just journaling about why I couldn't write, before moving location and starting to write.
- ✓ Respect where you are: Rather than pushing aside emotions or doubts that I had when I started exploring why I couldn't write, I started acknowledging where I was and asking myself what I needed. I started to respect where I was. Once I stopped trying to force myself or stuff down what I was feeling and respected what I was feeling, I was able to better find a compromise that would work for me and my brain.
- ✓ Have Compassion for yourself: Part of respecting where I was on a certain day, meant treating myself with compassion. Sometimes this was asking my brain what I needed. Was it that I needed to journal about other life things first, then would be willing to sit down and do some of the more formal writing I wanted to do? Was it that I needed to create a 'shit draft' to let my brain know that it was okay for my writing to be crappy that day, but that I still wanted to get words on paper? Was it that I needed to see if I could do one sentence first, then decide whether I was going to continue to a paragraph, then see if I could keep going?

Compartmentalizing and building writing habits. All throughout my PhD I was juggling tutoring work, research assistantships, and being a mom and wife. I found that time disappeared quickly if I did not dedicate it specifically to certain tasks. Having a visual of a weekly plan with dedicated writing times helped me develop a writing habit. I learned to guard my writing days ferociously and kick myself out of the house or shared office to make sure I gave myself time and space for writing.

- ✓ Figure out when you focus best. Dedicate those times to writing. Save checking emails or doing logistical tasks for a part of the day that you don't need as much thinking energy.
- ✓ Compartmentalize your schedule. Have specific days or times when you do outside work and when you focus on your work. Colour these on a calendar so that you can guard and separate them! It can be easy to feel that your tutoring job, your teaching job, your research assistant work for your supervisor is the most important thing, however this can steal all your time! Having a dedicated time you will spend on work, family, and personal activities, and having a dedicated time for only your thesis work, can help you balance these different responsibilities.
- ✓ Create a habit. In my MA thesis, I decided every day after I dropped my young son off at school, I would go and write for 1 hour in the morning. There were times that I was so tired I would park outside the café where I would write and sleep in the car for 20 minutes, but I stuck to the habit of going, knowing that if I went home instead, I wouldn't have that time. Habits teach our brains that it is time for this activity which makes it a lot easier the next time to write/read/whatever!

Asking for support. This was probably one of the most challenging things I had to learn during my PhD journey. A PhD can be very independent, so it is easy to forget that we don't have to do everything on our own. I challenged myself to practice asking for help and found the following support resources very helpful.

- ✓ Mauri Ora counselling and health advisors. Life doesn't stop when we are focusing on our research. Counsellors are here to help you face stressors and create the healthiest balance for juggling everything you are facing currently.
- ✓ Asking/telling supervisors what you need. I found it really helpful to start being clear about what I needed from my supervisors. Sometimes that meant that I didn't want them to assess the quality of my writing, but I wanted them to only focus on the ideas or the organization of what I had written. Other times it was explaining that I needed to not think about specific timelines or reported goals, but just keep writing at a steady pace and assess my progress at the 6-month review. Other times it was asking for detailed feedback on a section to check my analysis.
- ✓ PG Hardship fund. I don't like the name of this resource, because I feel we all feel that we may not

'really' be facing hardship, but this fund is designed to help support PG students. If you are struggling to make ends meet and it is distracting you from your research, talk to the financial support team and think about applying for funding to help you concentrate on the research rather than your financial stress.

- ✓ Safe spaces around campus. For me, I utilized the Ramsey House Chaplaincy and Wan Solwara as my places to focus and feel inspired. For others it might be the Rainbow room, the Āwhina spaces, or Pasifika Haos. Find a space that you feel comfortable in.
- ✓ Support for PG writing. My brain works well with peer companionship in approaching tasks. I utilized FGR's Shut-up-and-write sessions (previously), Thesis bootcamps and PGSA's Writing to Finish days to have dedicated longer focused writing times.

Student Learning and FGR have great workshops to help approach different parts of the PG journey and thesis writing. Student Learning also has one-to-one support for anything from looking at specific writing, to checking in for developing a writing habit or talking through the organization of a specific section of your thesis.

These are just a few of the things that helped me in my PhD journey. I hope they offer you hope and ideas for yours!.

Brittany Hoback, School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, VUW

Useful resources

Explore our list of research-related links that will help you throughout your research studies

MBTI Personality Test

The MBTI is a commonly used personality profiling tool designed to identify your personality type, strengths, preferences, etc. A free version is available [here](#)

Events happening soon

Looking for other events happening inside and outside VUW? We go over some interesting events happening worldwide

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Research Services, The Library, VUW	Rainbow Studies NOW: Legacies of Community Symposium (<i>Dual</i>)	23 Nov, 09:30 – 18:00 NZST Registrations are open until 10 Nov	Here
Student Learning, VUW	Transition to Postgraduate Studies (<i>in-person</i>)	14 Nov, 15:10 – 16:00pm NZST	Here
	Writing a Literature Review (<i>in-person</i>)	28 Nov, 15:10pm – 16:00pm NZST	Here
Complete Dissertation by Statistics Solution	Mastering Your Discussion Chapter (<i>Online</i>)	08 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here
	Running and Interpreting Correlation Tests (<i>Online</i>)	10 Nov, 10:00 NZST	Here
	Mastering Your Qualitative Methodology (<i>Online</i>)	14 Nov, 09:00 NZST	Here
	ANOVAs (<i>Online</i>)	17 Nov, 10:00 NZST	Here
	Qualitative Data Collection (<i>Online</i>)	29 Nov, 09:00 NZST	Here
	Navigating Writing Advice to Get Your Dissertation Moving (<i>Online</i>)	30 Nov, 08:00 NZST	Here

Organizer	Event	Date and Time	Register
Lumivero	Forecasting Asset Renewal & Replacement Using @RISK <i>(Online)</i>	03 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here
	Write Like a Star Scholar <i>(Online)</i>	03 Nov, 06:00 NZST	Here
	The Joy of Doing Grounded Theory Online <i>(Online)</i>	15 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here
	Successfully Balance Time for Work and Life <i>(Online)</i>	17 Nov, 07:00 NZST	Here
	Assessment of the Panel Performance in CATA and RATA Experiments <i>(Online)</i>	23 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here
	<i>Advancements in Mixed Methods Research Integration (Online)</i>	30 Nov, 05:00 NZST	Here
Google Garage	CV's and Cover letters <i>(Online)</i>	09 Nov, 17:00 UK Time 27 Nov, 10:00 UK Time	Here
	Create videos for YouTube <i>(Online)</i>	20 Nov, 14:00 UK Time	Here
	Find your balance with technology <i>(Online)</i>	08 Nov, 12:00 UK Time 15 Nov, 09:30 UK Time	Here
	Boost your productivity with AI <i>(Online)</i>	08 Nov, 10:00 UK Time 14 Nov, 16:30 UK Time	Here
	Understanding Machine Learning <i>(Online)</i>	07 Nov, 13:00 UK Time 22 Nov, 11:00 UK Time	Here
	Build engaging presentations <i>(Online)</i>	02 Nov, 17:00 UK Time 17 Nov, 10:00 UK Time	Here
	Digital marketing strategy <i>(Online)</i>	21 Nov, 09:30 UK Time	Here
	Build your personal brand online <i>(Online)</i>	06 Nov, 16:00 UK Time	Here
Taylor & Francis	Towards Human-Centric Sciences <i>(Online)</i>	02 Nov, 22:30 NZST	Here
	Understanding Open Research <i>(Online)</i>	16 Nov, 03:00 NZST	Here
	Avoiding Ethics Issues in Academic Publishing <i>(Online)</i>	22 Nov, 21:00 NZST	Here
	Excellence in Peer Review: How to be an effective peer reviewer <i>(Online)</i>	30 Nov, 06:00 NZST	Here
NR Computer Learning Center	Microsoft Excel: Basic to Advanced Features Overview <i>(Online)</i>	13 Nov, 11:30 NZST	Here
	Excel: Building a Dashboard in an Hour <i>(Online)</i>	20 Nov, 11:30 NZST	Here
	Introduction to Data Analytics <i>(Online)</i>	20 Nov, 10:00 NZST	Here
The Education Hub	Writing in a digital age <i>(Online)</i>	11 Nov, 9:30 NZST	Here

**Please note that by listing these events we are not endorsing any organisations but rather compiling and sharing a list of resources that may be helpful.*

FGR

The Wellington Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) works to ensure that your experience as a thesis student is a positive one. For more information, visit our [website](#)

Contact

Postgraduate Research Student Advisers: FGR-postgrads@vuw.ac.nz

- *Enrolling in your doctoral or master's programme.*
- *Candidature management changes.*

Online forms for thesis candidature changes can be found [here](#).

Thesis Examinations: FGR-Masters-Exams@vuw.ac.nz or PhD-Exams@vuw.ac.nz

- *Submission or examination of theses.*

Scholarships and Doctoral Admissions: pg-research@vuw.ac.nz:

- *Doctoral applications or the doctoral application process*
- *Scholarships*