

# Thesis roadmap: A five-step plan






In order for you to create a strong plan for self-management while writing your thesis, here are some steps to take in order to accomplish your goals in a timely (and straightforward!) manner.

## 1 Set realistic goals

Setting goals assists with staying focused and motivated!

One way to set realistic goals is by adhering to the SMART goal model, which means setting **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART)** goals for each stage of the thesis writing process.

### What is a SMART goal for a thesis?

-  **Specific:** Start by being clear about what you want to achieve.
-  **Measurable:** Make sure you can track progress within your goal.
-  **Achievable:** Make sure your goal is feasible within the time frame you have set.
-  **Relevant:** Ensure that your goal aligns with your interests and work.
-  **Time-bound:** Set a deadline for when you want to achieve your goal.



### Here's an example!

-  "I want to write my thesis so I can graduate."
-  "I want to complete the first draft of my literature review by the end of next month, with a goal of writing 500 words per day and getting feedback from my advisor at least once a week in order to complete the thesis by May in so I can accept my job offer."



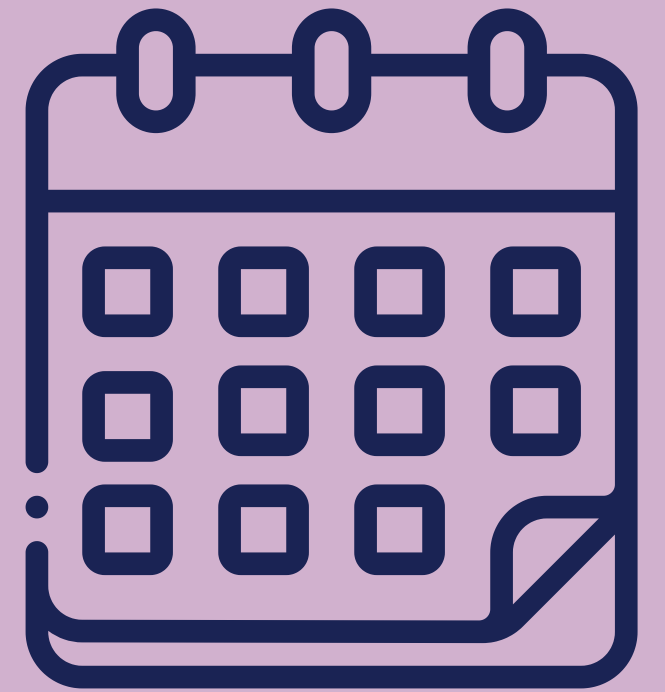
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## 2 Create a schedule

When you're writing your thesis, it's important to create a work schedule.

This may look like developing a weekly or daily schedule that includes time for research, writing, and (most importantly!) breaks.

Make sure to allocate enough time for each task and stick to the schedule as much as possible.



### ✓ Determine your timeline

- ➔ [Check with your department](#) regarding the final deadline for submission.
- ➔ Based on the deadline your department has and your own goals, create a schedule that breaks down your work into smaller, more manageable tasks.

### ✓ Prioritize tasks

- ➔ Prioritize the tasks in your work plan based on their importance and urgency.  
The SKILLSETS time management workshop may have helpful tips!
- ➔ Focus on the tasks that are most important and will have the greatest impact on completing your thesis.

### ✓ Create a work plan

- ➔ Include tasks such as designing research questions, writing drafts, and, finally, revising your work.
- ➔ Make sure to break down these tasks into smaller, manageable steps that can be accomplished within your daily and weekly schedule.

### ✓ Allocate time

- ➔ Allocate a reasonable amount of time for each task in your schedule, and, importantly, make sure to leave extra time for unexpected issues or delays.

If you're not sure how to know how much time to expect when working on something, [check out this resource!](#)

### 3 Use tools

Many tools are available to help with organization while writing your thesis. Consider using a project management tool, a citation manager like Zotero, or a writing tool like MS Word—which includes a tracker for changes—to help keep track of progress, citations, and revisions.


 Mural

 Notion

 Endnote

 Zotero

 Onenote

 MS Word-Track Changes

### 4 Stay motivated

Seek out resources to make sure there is adequate support and balance in the writing and revision process!

This may look like getting feedback early and often. Share work with an advisor and other trusted individuals for feedback. This will be useful in ensuring accountability and progress.

[Check out resources](#) on how to build a strong relationship with your supervisor!

Writing a thesis can be a long and challenging process, so it's important to stay motivated.

Find ways to acknowledge the progress made along the way.

- ★ Finished your literature review?  
Grab dinner with a friend!
- ★ Stuck on designing research experiments?  
Reflect on what you have accomplished so far!

### 5 Find support



Being surrounded by folks who understand the thesis-writing process and who can offer encouragement and support when needed can be critical in maintaining an effective workflow. Consider joining a writing group or connecting with other grad students in a similar situation.



McGill's [Graphos](#) writing program may be a good option to ensure that you develop a good network and team!