

Some Red Spices (*Foods to Avoid*)



As you put your proposal and research study together, keep in mind some things you do not want to include. These are not presented in any order of importance or hierarchy.

Do not use hyperbole—“everyone knows,” “it is obvious,” “this must be the case,” “clearly.” What is clear and obvious to one reader is not to another.

Do not use clichés—“in this ever changing world,” “in this postmodern world.”

Do not use gender-specific terms—“For a person to be successful, he must....”

Do not use a pronoun unless it is crystal clear whom the pronoun is referring to—“in their study they found.”

Do not assume what you are trying to resolve. If you are trying to determine whether technology can help learning, do not start by assuming that technology helps learning. Assumptions should be limited to those factors that are truly out of your control.

Do not present only one view. There are many sides to an issue. Present as many views as you can and critically analyze all points of view, including your own.

Do not have headings that do not match the content.

Do not use articles that are not in peer-reviewed journals unless you have obtained permission from your committee.

Do not use someone else’s survey (in part or in total) without obtaining permission.

Do not forget the rules of good writing—a paragraph should contain one thesis statement and sufficient supporting evidence. Every sentence needs a verb and a subject. You should stick to the point and make every word count. Remember the Goldilocks principle of paragraphs: Paragraphs should not be too short or too long, they should be just right!

Do not pose a rhetorical question to the reader in a scholarly publication. Example: “Why do you suppose so many educators dislike NCLB?”

Do not present unfounded and unsupportable generalizations (e.g., all large multinational corporations abuse labor in developing countries).

Do not use absolute phrases such as “This study will contribute or will show”; instead use phrases such as “might contribute” or “could contribute.”

Do not use statements with “I,” “me,” “we,” or “our.” Most dissertations and formal research papers require the use of the third-person voice. Some universities are now allowing the use of first person voice sparingly, but don’t overuse it

With the hope that the dissertation will be read for many years to come, do not use vague references for time, such as today, recent, currently, presently.

Do not write in an informal voice. This is a scholarly paper.

Do not send another draft to your Chair or committee unless prior comments and concerns have been addressed.

Do not overuse the phrase “this research” when it may be more scholarly to simply state what occurred in the study.

Do not claim that your findings are “significant” if your study is qualitative; instead, you can claim they are “suggestive.”

Do not be inconsistent! If you use a statistic more than once, make sure it is the same statistic.

Do not use faulty logic. For example: RED HERRING. This fallacy introduces an irrelevant issue into a discussion as a diversionary tactic. It takes people off the issue at hand; it is beside the point. Example: Many people say that teachers need money, but I would like to remind them how difficult it is to be an engineer. For more examples see Phase 3 of: *Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipes for Success* (Simon, 2011).

Do not over cite one source. Provide a range of sources.

Do not use too many direct quotes, particularly long quotes.

Do not be redundant by unnecessarily repeating the expression of ideas. Within the same chapter or section of your dissertation, making a point once is sufficient.

Do not plagiarize. There are many programs that can check your work on plagiarism such as Turnitin.com.

Some Green Spices (*Foods to Consume*)



As you put your proposal and research study together, keep in mind some things you do want to do or include. These are not presented in any order of importance or hierarchy.

Do back up your work every day! Check out an online service like Carbonite <http://www.carbonite.com/en/default.aspx>, or free services such as Dropbox.com. By using an online cloud (a data warehousing of hundreds of terabytes), if your computer dies, is stolen, or is lost your data are still retrievable!

Do date all iterations of your study. Writing a scholarly manuscript is an iterative process, and each time a request is made to change or modify a component of your study, a new document should be generated. However, you probably want to save prior iterations in case, for whatever reason, the change is nullified.

Do appreciate feedback. Feedback is a gift. Your committee and your university want you to create the best dissertation possible. Pay attention to their feedback.

Do establish a routine for checking in with your dissertation chair. Developing a charter that clarifies your relationship is very helpful.

Do send your best iterations to your committee. It is unrealistic to think that your committee will correct or overlook your grammatical or formatting errors. However, do not wait for a perfect iteration to share with you chair. Make sure that your chair is aware that you are sending a draft or edited version.

Do integrate references in each paragraph of your literature review. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography – it is a critical evaluation of scholarly articles, books and other sources (e.g. dissertations, conference proceedings). The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on the topic you are investigating.

Do critically evaluate the references you discuss, and provide a summary of this critical evaluation.

Do remember that a good dissertation is a completed one. This should be the beginning of your scholarly research – not the conclusion.

Do remember to live a balanced life. You need to make time for a healthy life style and quality time with friends and family during the dissertation process.

Do develop a support system. Having a dissertation buddy can make the journey more enjoyable.

Do celebrate each milestone. These include, but are not limited to: chair approval, committee approval, university approval, IRB approval, and publication.

Do prepare academically, mentally, physically, and psychologically for your oral defense. Anticipate which questions are likely to be asked, and have a response ready.

Do spend a lot of time developing an excellent abstract. The abstract is a window into the content of the full dissertation, the first (and sometimes the only) thing some one interested in your study will read. Check your university guidelines regarding form, style, length, and content.

Do spend a lot of time developing a title for your dissertation. Check the number of words allowable (they usually vary between 12 and 15 words). Avoid redundancy and aim for clarity and precision. The type of study and the problem resolved should be apparent.

Do remember this is YOUR study. You are responsible for everything that goes into a dissertation and all the data that are collected and analyzed.

Do be flexible: A bend in the road is not the end of the road, unless you fail to make the turn! Research is not a linear process.

Do keep a dissertation journal to keep track of your progress and offer you a place to “vent” when things do not go as planned.

Do have all the resources you need to complete your study. Bookmark: <http://dissertationrecipes.com/> and check back often for updates and suggestions.