

# Dissertation Jumpstart Workbook



**Dr. Daveena Tauber**  
[Scholar-studio.com](http://Scholar-studio.com)

# UNIT 1. Sense of Purpose

*What are your top three reasons for wanting to complete your degree?*

*What will be the most important results of finishing your degree?*

*How did you first get interested in your subject and specific project?*

*What fascinates you about your project?*

*Who are the stakeholders? Who will your research benefit?*

*What are the three most likely obstacles to finishing your project?*

*What are the most important things you can do to keep yourself moving forward?*

# UNIT 2. Technical Systems

Word Processing  
Using Files and Folders  
Labeling Files  
Backup Systems  
Citation Management Systems  
Document Formatting

*What word processing systems(s) are you using? What skills do you need to learn within that system?*

*Do you organize files into folders or just store files on your desktop or hard drive?*

*What is your system for labeling documents?*

*Can you find any document 3 years later?*

Check all current backups you are using

Hard drive / Time Machine (Mac).

Carbonite, Mozy, or other cloud-based backup service

Dropbox.

Email drafts to yourself after each work session.

Thumb drive for backup on the go or where there is no internet.

University drive.

Other:

*How are you currently managing citations? (EndNote, Zotero, Mendeley, other).*

*Which would you like to adopt and learn?*

*Have you checked your university's thesis or dissertation formatting guidelines? Do they offer an electronic template?*

### **Technical To-Do List (put a check by any items that you need to improve)**

Word Processing

Files and Folders

Document Labeling

Desktop and Cloud-based Backup Systems

Citation Management Systems

Thesis Formatting

# UNIT 3. Healthy Writing Habits

*What are your pre-writing rituals?*

*Do they actually lead you toward writing or distract you from it?*

*Do you tend to be a binge writer or a snack writer?*

*What techniques do you use as a writer (Check all that you use or have tried. Circle those you will commit to trying during this Boot Camp)*

*Free writing*

*Timed writing <http://pomodorotechnique.com/>*

*Retreat writing*

*Outtakes file*

*Other (specify)*

# UNIT 4. Support and Accountability

*How do you currently create accountability for your “writing time”? Check all that apply.*

- I don't
- Schedule time on calendar
- Accountability group
- Set deadlines
- Track progress
- Have work dates with others
- Other:

## Tool 1. Permission Slip



### Graduate-Level Permission Slip

This slip entitles \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ days / hours off from all thesis- or dissertation-related work, thoughts, conversations. Infractions will result in having to start “time off” all over again.

*“All work and no play makes you a dull scholar”*

## Tool 2. Weekly Goal Sheet (see blank copies at end of section)

*Set very specific, small goals for each project for each week*

	Intro chapter	Lit Review	Grad teaching asst	Exercise
Week of June 5		Read and annotate 3 articles. Use Quotes and notes for each of them.	Set up labs for students M, W, and F.	Hit gym 3 times this week for 1 hour

## Tool 3. Work Tracking Sheet (see blank copies at end of section)

Do not aim to touch every project every day. Decide that you will aim to touch 2-3 projects per day. Find your ideal number.

Seeing progress in large academic projects can be challenging. Tracking work makes progress visible and helps you give yourself credit.

	Intro chapter	Lit Review	Grad research asst	Exercise
Monday	X			
Tues		X		X
Wed		X	X	X
Thurs	X			
Friday				
Sat		X		X



Sund	X			
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*Who is your “pit crew”? Make a list of people and their specific roles in helping you. Could include pep talks, hugs, reading your work, making you a therapy appointment when you’re too tired.*

1.

2.

3.

4.

### ***Work Date Buddies***

Make a list of people you can ask for work dates. They do not have to be academics or writers. Anyone who needs to get work done will do.

### Weekly Goal Sheet (copy and adapt for your projects)

Date	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4

### Work Tracking Sheet (copy and adapt for your projects)

Date	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

# UNIT 5. Advising and Mentoring

*Advisors play different roles. Rank these in the order of importance to you with 1 being the most important.*

**Intellectual mentor** [gives content expertise; helps you understand the specific conventions, rituals, and norms of your field; helps you build your identity as an academic)

**Professional mentor** [helps you find funding; think about how to apply your skills, introduces you to people; recommends journals to publish in, etc)

**Feedback-giver** [gives useful, actionable feedback that helps you develop as a writer. Helps you work through edits.]

**Project coach** [helps you structure your work and create accountability]

**Affective / emotional support** [offers encouragement, is someone you can talk to about life issues]

**Cheerleader** [gives encouragement; expresses belief in your capability]

**Drill sergeant** [plays the authority role]

*What is the most important thing you need from your advisor?*

*What qualities are most important to you in an advisor?*

Assuming you can't get everything you need from one person, which other faculty or campus resources can you access to meet some of these needs?

Take some time to investigate these resources on your campus:

Writing Center

Learning Resource Center

Library

Tech Support Lab

Student Health Center

# UNIT 6. Positive Scholarly Identity

*In general, what is your self-perception as a student and a learner?*

*Are there educational experiences or images of yourself that make you anxious?*

*Are you returning to school after a long hiatus? How does this feel and how / does the world of education look different now?*

*Do you tend to perceive classmates or others as “belonging” more than you do?*

*Do your parents have college degrees?*

*Does anyone else in your family have a graduate degree? How did you / do you perceive them? What does it mean to you that you are earning an MA or Ph.D.?*