

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

How to Format a Dissertation: A Guide

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Field of Dissertation Formatting

By

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### Arrangement of the Dissertation

Each dissertation must be arranged in the following order. Specific information about each section is on the following pages. Italicized pages are optional.

- Title page
- *Copyright page*
- Abstract
- *Acknowledgment page*
- *Preface*
- *List of Abbreviations*
- *Glossary*
- *Nomenclature*
- *Dedication*
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables, Illustrations, Figures, or Graphs
- *Introduction*
- Text body
- Tables, Illustrations, Figures, Graphs<sup>1</sup>
- References
- *Appendices*
- *Vita*

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<sup>1</sup> If not incorporated into the main body of the text, these items should immediately follow the text. They should not be placed at the end of chapters.

## **Formatting and Layout Requirements**

### **Page Size**

- The page size should be 8.5 x 11", standard US Letter size (not A4).

### **Margins**

- There should be one inch margins on all sides, including page numbers.
- Page numbers should conform to margin requirements and be placed at least 1" from the top and right sides of the page, as appears in this document. A tutorial for page number placement appears later in this document.

### **Spacing**

- The preliminary pages (abstract, dedication, acknowledgements, table of contents) and main body text must be double spaced.
- Quotations, captions, items in tables, lists, graphs and charts may be single spaced.

### **Pagination**

- Every page in a dissertation is numbered, *except the title page*.
- Page numbering will begin on the second page with Arabic numeral 2.
- There should be no blank pages.
- On pages of the dissertation that are formatted with landscape orientation, the page number must appear in lower right-hand corner of the page, so that it would appear in the correct location if the page were rotated to portrait orientation. A landscape page tutorial appears later in this document.

### **Fonts**

- Any legible font is permitted except script, italic, or ornamental fonts. Fonts must be embedded.
- Font size should be equivalent in scale to 10pt. Arial or 12pt. Times New Roman.

### **Foreign Language Dissertations**

- A student in a foreign language department who writes the dissertation in a language other than English is required to write a 10-20 page summary of the dissertation in English and include it as an appendix.
- The abstract of a foreign language dissertation must be in English.

## Dissertation Content Requirements

### Title Page

The title page should conform to the sample below. See also the title page of this document.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
Title of Dissertation in Title Case
A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
for the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Field of (program name)
By (author full name)
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
(Month Year of Degree Conferral)

- **Dissertation Title<sup>2</sup>**
  - The title of the dissertation should be in mixed case; the first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs are capitalized. Articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor), and prepositions, regardless of length, are lowercased unless they are the first or last word of the title or subtitle. Only acronyms should be set in full capitals.
  - Special characters cannot be used in titles. Use word substitutes in place of formulas, symbols, superscripts, or Greek letters.
- **Academic Field**
  - The academic field designated on the title page must be selected from the [official list provided by The Graduate School](#).
- **Date**
  - There is no comma between the month and year. This date should correspond to the expected month of degree conferral.

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<sup>2</sup> For dissertation title best practices, see Appendix A.

**Copyright Page**

- If you choose to copyright your manuscript, a copyright notice must appear on a separate page following the title page. It should read as follows:

© Copyright by (your name) 20\_\_  
All Rights Reserved

For more information about copyrighting your dissertation, please see the information on the TGS [website](#).

**Abstract**

- Inclusion of the abstract within the preliminary pages of the dissertation is required.
- Mathematical formulas, photographs, diagrams, and other illustrative materials are not recommended for inclusion in the abstract.

**Optional Prefatory Pages**

- Acknowledgment page
- Preface
- List of abbreviations
- Glossary
- Nomenclature
- Dedication

**Table of Contents**

- The format of the table of contents should conform to the guidelines in an approved style manual.
- It is important that the table of contents accurately reflect the outline and organization of the manuscript.

**Lists of Tables, Illustrations, Figures, or Graphs**

- These lists should reproduce the specific titles and page locations of all illustrative materials.

**Body of the Text**

- Chapters should follow a logical outline, with a clear distinction between chapters, main heads within chapters, and subordinate heads within the main heads.
- The outline and organization of the main body of the text should be accurately reflected in the table of contents.
- All non-textual elements (e.g., tables, graphs, and images) must be described in the text.

**Tables, Illustrations, Figures, Graphs**

- If not incorporated into the main body of the text, these items should immediately follow the text, not at the end of chapters.
- Margin requirements must be met on all pages that contain charts, graphs, tables, or illustrations.

**References**

- Each dissertation must include references to document the text.
- These references may be included at the bottom of the page or at the end of the text, but cannot be placed at the end of each chapter.
- The format for references must conform to the guidelines in an approved style manual.

**Appendices (optional)**

- The format for the appendices must conform to the guidelines in an approved style manual.

**Vita (optional)**

- It is recommended that each copy of the dissertation include a brief vita containing the author's name, place of birth, education, relevant professional experience, and publications. The vita page is numbered.

**Supplementary Materials (optional)**

If supplementary materials—such as audio, video, and spreadsheets—are part of your dissertation or thesis, you can submit them as supplementary files during the online submission process. See Appendix B for additional details.

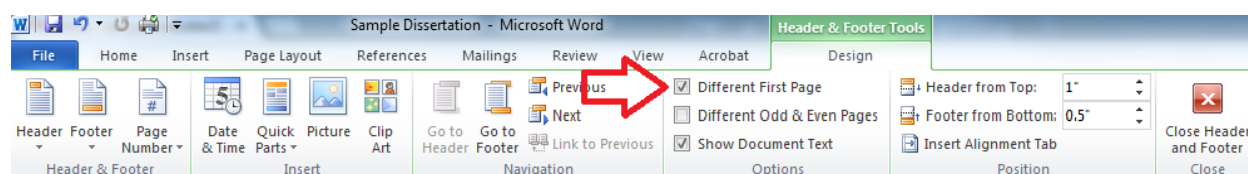
- Do not embed media files in your PDF.
- Upload media files as supplementary files. During online submission, you will be asked to upload any supplementary files.
- Describe files in your abstract. Add a description of each supplementary file in your abstract.

## Guides and How-To's

This section will provide tutorials on some of the most common dissertation formatting problems. The vast majority of these tutorials have to do with page numbers, which are the single most common error that comes up in dissertation reviews. After reading these tutorials, you will be able to format your page numbers to start and stop in the right places, respect the margin requirements, and appear in the proper place on landscape pages<sup>3</sup>.

### How to Number Your Pages Correctly

As you may recall from Chapter 1, every page in the dissertation should have a page number, with the exception of the title page. The numbering should begin on the second page with “2”. The easiest way to make sure the title page is not numbered, while ensuring that every other page is numbered, is by changing the header settings. In order to do this, click into the header so that the “Header & Footer Tools” menu appears. Then, make sure the “Different First Page” option is selected. Now you can delete the page number from the title page while still leaving page numbers on the rest of the page.



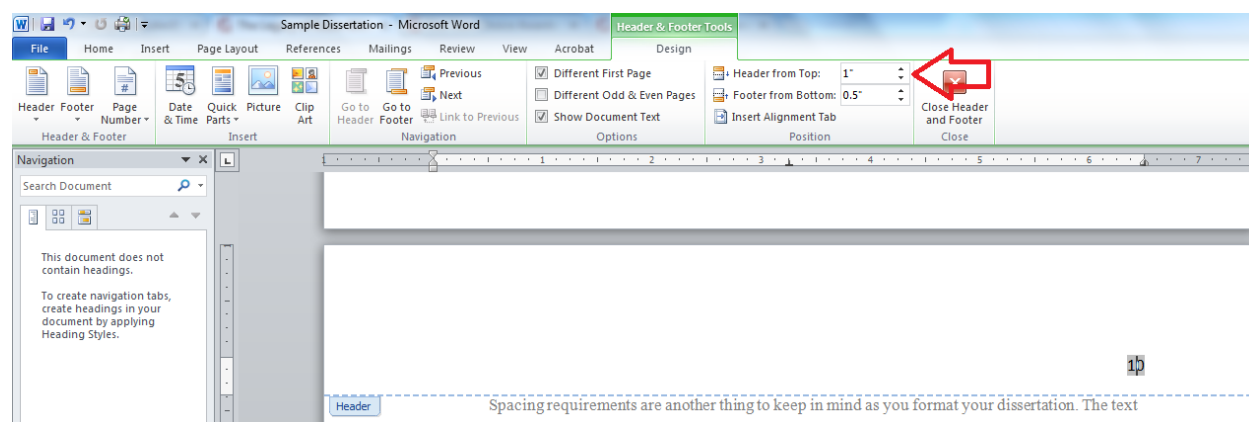
**Figure 1 - Header and Footer Tools menu with "Different First Page" option selected.**

The single most common formatting error that appears in NU dissertations is the placement of page numbers. Page numbers need to be placed in the upper right-hand corner of the page, and they need to conform to margin requirements. These margin requirements are important because of ProQuest's archiving process; when dissertations are archived, the pages are cropped, and if text, figures, or page

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, these tutorials are designed to help with dissertations written in Microsoft Word. If you are using LaTeX, these guides will be of no use. Of course, if you are using LaTeX, you probably aren't having these problems to begin with.

numbers are placed too close to the edge of the page, they run the risk of being cut off. Assuming your margin settings are correct, Microsoft Word should automatically place page numbers one inch from the right side of the page; it's the requirement that they be placed one inch from the top of the page that causes problems, as the default header setting puts only a half-inch margin between the page number and the top of the page.

The solution to this problem can be found in the "Header and Footer Tools" menu. Once the menu is open, set the "Header from Top" distance to one inch. This setting adjustment will ensure that any text in the header, including page numbers, is placed one inch from the top of the page<sup>4</sup>.



**Figure 2 - Header and Footer Tools menu, with "Header from Top" set to one inch.**

In some cases, you might want to insert a landscape page into your thesis in order to accommodate a table or figure. The important thing to remember is that the page numbers on landscape pages need to be placed so that they will appear in the upper right-hand corner of the page *if the page were rotated to portrait orientation*. The following tutorial will show you how to include a landscape page and properly position page numbers.

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<sup>4</sup> If you change your header settings after setting up your Table of Contents, you will probably want to double-check that the Table of Contents and any other numbered lists (List of Figures or List of Tables) are still accurate, as changing the distance of the header from the top of the page can throw off the numbering.



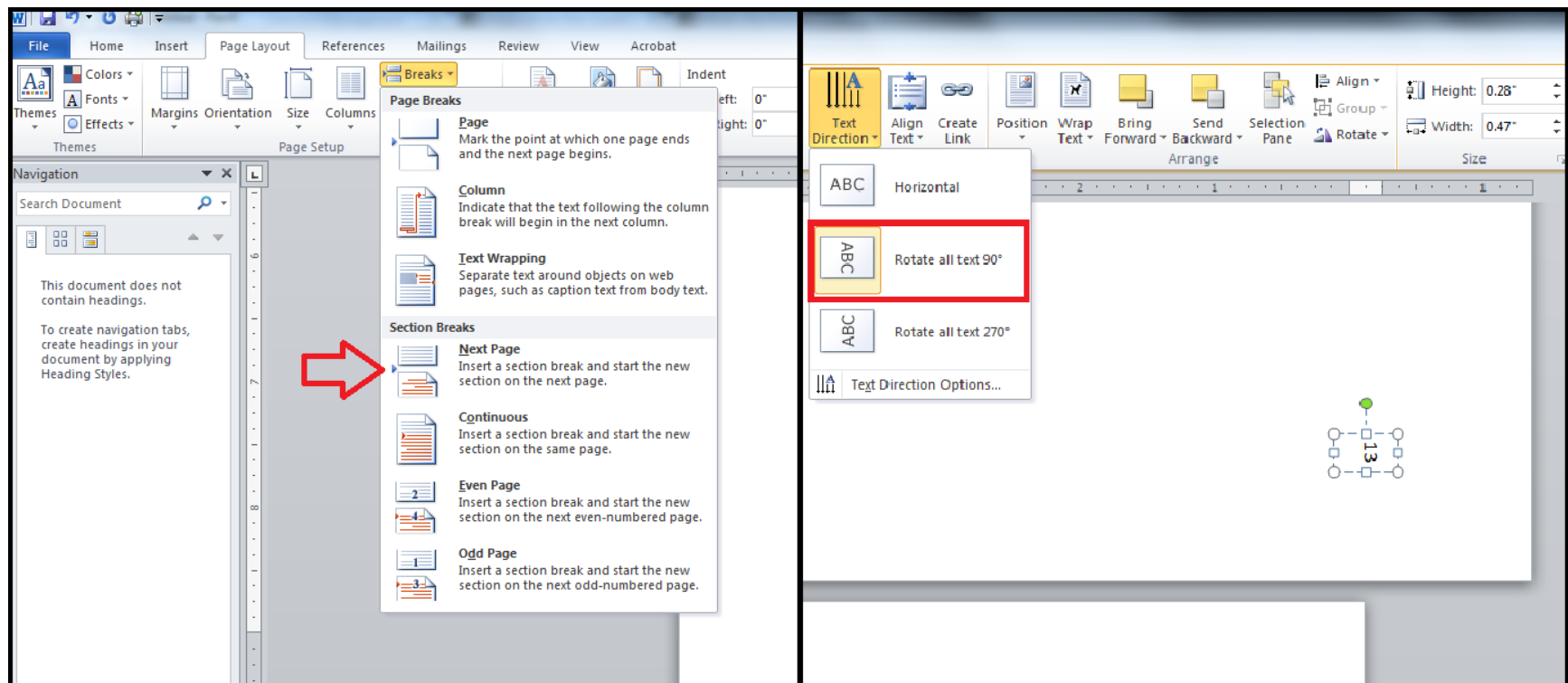


Figure 3 – Page Layout menu with “Next Page” section break selected; Drawing Tools menu with “Rotate all text 90°” selected under the “Text Direction” heading.

In order to insert a landscape page into a document with portrait orientation, you will need to start a new section. In order to do this, use the “Page Breaks” tool within the Page Layout menu, and select the type of section break labelled “Next Page,” as seen in Figure 3. Once you have created the new section, select the new page and change the orientation (also in the Page Layout menu) to landscape.

To add a page number to your landscape page, insert a text box by going to the Insert menu and selecting “Text Box.” Now, reposition your text box so that it appears in the lower right-hand corner of the page. Make sure that your text box is positioned one inch from the edges of the page. You can then type in the appropriate page number. In order to get the number to face the correct direction, click into the text box and select the Drawing Tools menu. From there, select the “Text Direction” sub-menu and choose the “Rotate all text 90°” option, as seen in Figure 3. Your page number should now be facing the appropriate direction. In order to put the remaining pages back into landscape format, add another section break and change the page orientation back to “Portrait.” You may have to add the page numbers back into the header in this section, in which case you should double-check that your page numbers are still positioned properly.

## Appendix A – Dissertation Title Best Practices

Dissertations are a valuable resource for other scholars only if they can be easily located. Modern retrieval systems generally use the words in the title to locate a document. It is essential that the title be an accurate and meaningful description of the content and that obscure references be avoided. Please use these guidelines when formulating a dissertation title:

- **CASE:** The first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs (if, because, as, that, etc.) are capitalized. Articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor), and prepositions, regardless of length, are lowercased unless they are the first or last word of the title or subtitle. Only acronyms should be set in full capitals.  
Examples:  
Power and Consumer Behavior  
Outpatient Treatment for Children: Organizational Practices as Predictors of Recovery  
A Comparison of the Methodologies for Determining Achievement in High School
- **HYPHENATION:** Consult the dictionary as to whether a word is hyphenated. In general, do not hyphenate words beginning with the prefixes co, non, pre, post, or re unless there is a possibility of confusion (co-op, post-master's) or the root word begins with a capital letter (post-Renaissance). Hyphenate words beginning with the prefix self. Hyphenate compounds used as adjectives (decision-making) but not as nouns (decision maker). Part-time is always hyphenated. When more than one prefix is joined to a base word, hyphenate the prefixes standing alone (micro- and macroeconomics). Do not hyphenate fundraising, freelance, yearlong, health care, African American, Asian American.  
Examples:  
Great Nonfiction Works of the Nineteenth Century (Instead of: Great Non-fiction Works of the 19th Century)
- **SPELLING AND GRAMMAR:** Dissertation titles should be spell-checked and dictionary spelling of words should be used. Use “and” rather than “&,” and spell out names of centuries and other numbers usually spelled out in text.  
Example:  
The Labour Party in Perspective and Twelve Years Later
- **SPECIAL CHARACTERS:** No special characters should appear in the dissertation title (SES/CAESAR cannot accommodate special characters). Terms or phrases that include special characters should instead be written out.  
Examples:  
Evaluation of DNA Hybridization and Cleavage Capabilities of Peptide Nucleic Acid-Titanium Dioxide (instead of: Evaluation of DNA Hybridization and Cleavage Capabilities of PNA-TiO<sub>2</sub>)  
The Role of TGF-beta Variants in Cancer (instead of: The Role of TGF-β Variants in Cancer)
- **ITALICIZATION:** Italics should only be used in dissertation titles when referring to the title of a published work, foreign language words, gene names, scientific names as appropriate, or other words that are usually italicized.  
Examples:  
Techniques in *Drosophila* Circadian Biology  
Mechanisms of Differentiated Cell Function *in vitro*
- **APOSTROPHES:** Do not use to form plurals (it should be 1940s, not 1940's) unless it would be confusing without (thus A's and B's, not As and Bs; p's, not ps). Possessives of singular nouns ending in s are formed by adding 's (e.g., Russ's dog).

## Appendix B – File Format Recommendations for Supplemental Files

Software applications used to open files and their specifications tend to become harder to find over time, and some formats will be difficult or impossible to read in the future. The file formats with the best chance of survival have open specifications, are high quality, and are in relatively wide use. Ensuring these formats can be accessed or read in the future is key to their long-term preservation.

Please follow these recommendations when making format choices for all content that is part of your dissertation submission. Also, make sure the format is an uncompressed version, highest quality compressed version, or the final production version. This will help maximize potential for long term preservation and accessibility.

Unfortunately, it's not possible to provide a single list of file formats that are appropriate for all use cases, but this list is a good starting point. Also, please exercise caution when using proprietary formats and digital rights management (DRM) software that may make viewing content difficult or impossible to access in the future. If you have any questions, please contact the University Libraries at [library@northwestern.edu](mailto:library@northwestern.edu). Your question will be routed to staff with the appropriate staff to help you.

**Simplified Guidelines/File Format Recommendations** (for more detailed specifications, see the [Library's scholarly communication libguide](#).)

- **Audio — Highly recommended: AIFF (.aif, .aiff) or WAV (.wav)** . Moderately recommended: MP3 (.mp3), AAC (.mp4, .mp4a, .aac), FLAC (.flac) or ALAC (.m4a).
- **Video — Highly recommended: Uncompressed Quicktime Movie (.mov); uncompressed AVI (.avi)**. Moderately recommended: MPEG-1, MPEG-2 or MPEG-4 encoded video (.avi, .mpg, .mpeg, .mov, .mkv, .mp4).
- **Virtual Reality/3D — Highly recommended: X3D (\*.x3d)**. Please talk with a Northwestern Digital Librarian to determine best output settings and format.
- **Image - Highly recommended: Full color images @ 600dpi or higher saved as JPEG2000 Lossless (.jp2) or TIFF 24-bit, uncompressed (.tif, .tiff)**. Moderately recommended: lossy compressed formats limited to JPEG (.jpg, .jpeg), JPEG2000 (.jp2), TIFF (.tif, .tiff), or PNG (.png) at highest quality possible.
- **Text - Highly recommended: Open Document Text (.odt), UTF-8 Unicode text (.txt), or PDF/A (.pdf)**. Moderately recommended: Rich Text Format (.rtf).
- **Presentation - Highly recommended: Open Document Presentation (.odp)**. Moderately recommended: PDF/A (.pdf) for images only.
- **Spreadsheet - Highly recommended: Open Document Spreadsheet (.ods)**. Moderately recommended: Comma separated value CSV (.csv) or Tab-delimited text file (.txt).