Thesis Manuscript and Format Basics

Below you’ll find some basics about thesis formats and some examples that may be helpful. Please note, though: Your advisor, your department, and if you’re an Honors candidate, the Honors Program has different requirements and expectations. Check with them early.

Many format and content elements also depend on the academic discipline’s style, such as MLA, APA, Chicago, ASA, and AAA. You can find links to the main disciplinary style guides in Ladd Library’s Citing Sources Guide.

I. Title Page

Your title page should include the following elements:

Your Full Thesis Title
A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of ____________* or the ______________ Program*

Bates College
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts [or Science]

by

Your Full Name
Lewiston, Maine
Due date, Year

No title page should ever have the Bates College official seal on it.

A formatted sample title page showing possible spacing and format appears at the end of this guide.

* The name of the Department or Program should be given as it is shown in the College Catalog

II. Margins and Binders

Non-Honors thesis-writers typically submit the thesis in a black binder (available at the College Bookstore for about $13 each). Your text needs to be at least 1.5” from the left edge of the paper, to insure space for the binder.

Honors candidates upload their theses to SCARAB and should set 1” margins.

Unless your advisor or your department or program has other guidelines, print your thesis single-sided rather than double-sided. (Environmental Studies, for example, requests double-sided printing.) For two-sided printing that will work in a binder, that generally means setting the left and right margins at 1” and the gutter margin at .5” (one-half inch) under Format → Document in Word.

Unless your department or applicable disciplinary style guide (e.g., MLA, Chicago, APA, ASA) specifies something different, text margins of 1” are generally acceptable for the top, bottom, and right edges of your page.
III. Pagination

Your discipline’s style guide (e.g., MLA, Chicago, APA, ASA) will usually specify where page numbers should be located - whether at the upper right, lower right, or bottom center of the page - and how far from the edge of the paper (often ½”).

If you include preliminary materials like an acknowledgments page, preface, list of abbreviations, list of figures, or table of contents, you can use Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page (ii, iii, iv). Don’t put a number on your title page; start with ii on whatever follows your title page (Acknowledgments, perhaps?). You can begin your Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3) with your Introduction.

Alternatively, you can use consecutive Arabic numbers (2, 3, 4) for every page of your thesis, starting with 2 on whatever follows your title page. Don’t put a page number on the title page.

Whichever route you go, every page of your thesis document should be included in the running count of pages, including figures, appendices, and bibliography. If you decide not to print a page number on certain pages (illustrations, for example), you should still count those sheets in your numbering. Because Honors theses are included in the Library catalog with the number of “leaves” or pages specified, providing clear, consistent numbering also helps the Library’s catalogers.

IV. Printing and Copies

Unless your advisor or your department or program has other guidelines, print your thesis single-sided rather than double-sided. With a non-Honors thesis, you’ll turn in one copy to your advisor and want to print one for yourself.

Honors candidates now upload their theses to SCARAB. However, your advisor may also want a print copy, so check with your advisor. You may also want to print a copy for yourself.

V. Possible Elements and Order of Parts

The components of your thesis will depend on your academic discipline, of course. Check with your advisor, department or program, and on its website for requirements and examples. Your department also has copies of past theses you might consult; Honors theses are available for review during business hours in Muskie Archives on Campus Avenue and on SCARAB, Bates’s digital archive, at scarab.bates.edu.

If your advisor and major do not have specific guidelines, the example below may suggest some elements and an order for presenting them. Depending on your discipline, your analysis and objectives, and the reader’s needs, of course, any figures, tables, or similar elements might be interspersed throughout the body of your thesis or saved until appendices at the end.
Basic Thesis Components:

Title Page  
Acknowledgments (might include faculty, funding organizations, family and friends, host family during fieldwork)  
Table of Contents  
Introduction  
Chapter I  
Chapter II  
Chapter III  
Chapter IV, etc.  
Conclusion  
Bibliography (which should be titled Works Cited, References, Literature Cited, Bibliography, or whatever your disciplinary style requires)  
Appendices (e.g., illustrations, photos, maps, charts, and other figures; key documents; survey instruments; the poems you analyzed…)

Other Possible Thesis Components by Discipline:

Depending on your discipline, you may need or want to include other elements in your thesis beyond the basics listed above. **Check with your advisor and department**, and seek out model theses from your department or program or theses on file in the Muskie Archives. The examples below from recent theses may suggest the kinds of other elements you might include in your thesis.

- **Art and Visual Culture**: Table of Contents, List of Illustrations, Introduction, Chapter I, etc., Conclusion, Works Cited, Appendix - Illustrations [reproductions of the images studied]
- **Asian Studies, Classical and Medieval Studies, Religious Studies**, or other departments or programs where a thesis might be in English but be based on texts in a foreign language: Table of Contents, A Note on the Text [explanatory information about translations, use of foreign words, transliteration choices, and the like], Introduction, etc.
- **Biology**: Table of Contents, Abstract, Introduction, Experimental Design, Methods and Materials, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, Literature Cited, Appendices
- **Chemistry**: Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, [List of specific chemical process products], List of Figures, List of Tables, List of Equations, Abstract, Introduction, etc.
- **Geology**: Table of Contents, Abstract, Table of Figures, Table of Tables, Introduction, Objectives, Overview, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, References, GIS Layers, Appendices
- **Psychology**: Table of Contents, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Participants, Measures, Procedure, Results, Discussion, References, List of Tables and Appendices, Table 1 [statistics], Table 2, Appendices: Survey instrument 1, Interview script, Survey instrument 2
- **Sociology**: [sections aren’t always titled this way, but this list reflects their content] Table of Contents, Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Analysis Chapter(s), Conclusion, References, Appendix/Appendices
Archetype and Individuation:
A Jungian Approach to the Life and Poetry of T.S. Eliot

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

by

Antonia Anastasia Aardvark
Lewiston, Maine
Month X, 20YZ