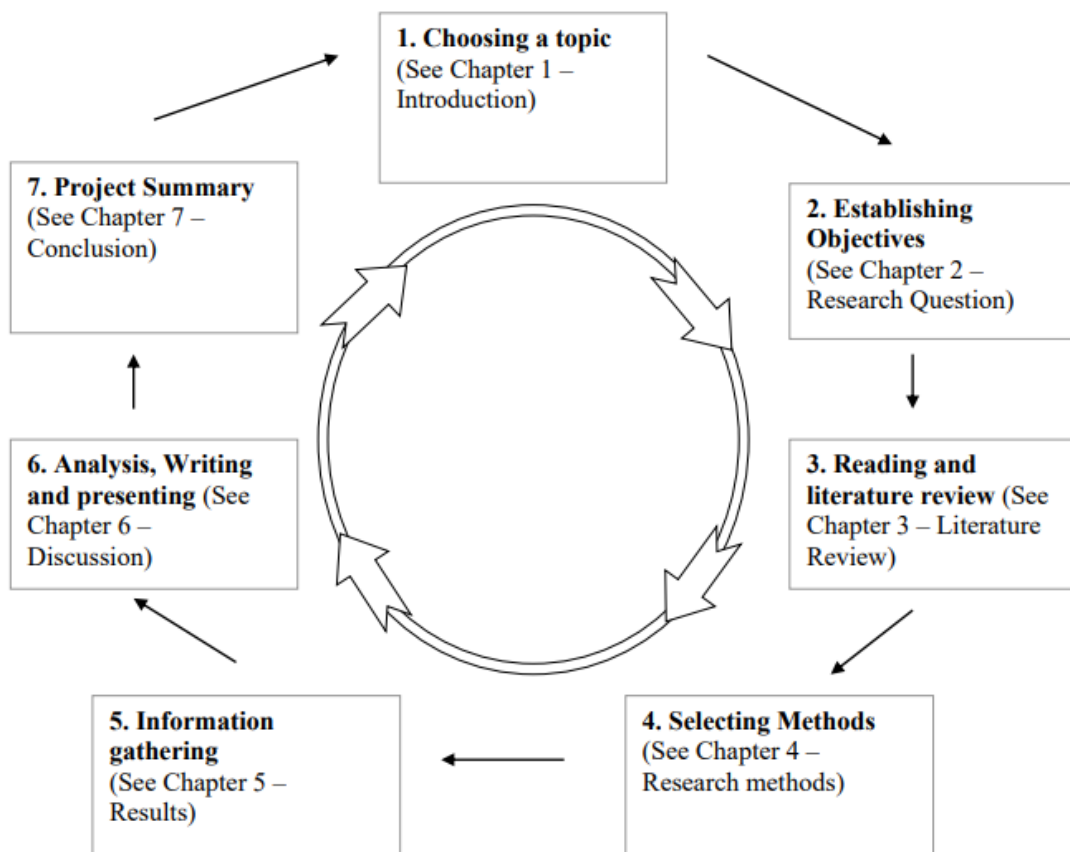


The Seven Carriages

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Writing a research project, a dissertation or a thesis can be a daunting challenge – but it need not be. The very thought of organising a reasonably complex document and presenting it in a format that will satisfy examiners and readers often causes significant concern (and in some cases stress) for the author. Essentially the task needs structure and flow ensuring that the various elements (chapters) have their own voice – but at the same time provide some form of connection so that the work ‘holds together’. The analogy we use is that of ‘Seven Carriages’ – seven separate issues somehow held together and readable from start to end.



The seven chapter model

Institutions often vary the model – sometimes six chapters and others prefer five chapters – but for the purpose of focus and support – we recommend a seven-chapter model (‘seven carriages’ as it were) that can help focus the writer and provide the necessary structure and flow needed.

Chapter 1 – Choosing a topic – the introduction

This chapter provides the opportunity to formally open the research project with a number of fundamental and comprehensive reasons why this research project is being conducted. It also outlines what will occur in the following chapters (that is, “carriages of the train”). In essence it is an expression of a problem.

Chapter 2 – Establishing objectives – the research question

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the core question (or problem) on which this project activity will grow. The process involved here will include a clear statement of what it is that the research is attempting to clarify. Without a research question there cannot be any research.

Chapter 3 – Reading and literature review

A literature review is an extensive, detailed survey of relevant research and theory in a specific area. It is a summary of the relevant research that places the Chapter 2 Research Problem(s)/question into context. The literature is reviewed and considered to find “gap(s)” to be filled by this study. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the state of the literature, as your research will build upon the current knowledge.

Chapter 4 – Selecting methods – research methods

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the research methods chosen to answer the research question. The reader needs a clear and comprehensive statement on what research methods have been selected to complete the project. This chapter is about describing and justifying the use of the instrument/s selected.

Chapter 5 – Information gathering – results

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the information collected, that is, the collection of the fieldwork data. Clearly, this chapter has a close affinity with the research methods chapter.

Chapter 6 – Analysis, writing and presenting

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the data collected. That is, this chapter makes sense of what you did. You need to clearly present your findings in the most accessible way possible

Chapter 7 – Project summary – conclusion

The purpose of this Chapter is to summarise the project and put forward its findings and recommendations. It is short, and a few pages at the most.

For this discussion – the order has been established and laid out for the purpose of clarity. In truth, each element/chapter could be written out of sequence and then joined together as final product – in other words linking the ‘carriages’ in an appropriate order moving forward. Writing a research project, dissertation and/or thesis will certainly take effort and time – but the process should not be daunting – and dare we say - could end up being a relatively enjoyable task (perhaps not).

See – **The Seven Carriages – An approach to thesis design and development** - [Project Design &](#)

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