

The Top 15 Errors Most Frequently Encountered on Theses and Dissertations:

1. **Incorrect page margins:** Page margins must be **1 ½ inches for left margin, 1 inch for right page margin, 1 ¼ inch for bottom margin.** The top page margin varies. Pages with **major headings can have a 1 inch OR a 2 inch top page margin.**
2. **Pages** are incorrectly **numbered.** Preliminary pages must be numbered with **lower case roman numerals** (example: i, ii, iii, iv). **Your thesis or dissertation starts on page 1.** This is the Introduction or Chapter One. The Introduction chapter counts as Chapter One.
3. **Lacking required elements of a thesis or dissertation:** Your thesis or dissertation **must include** a Signature page, Title page, Table of Contents, Abstract, Introduction, Review of Current Knowledge, Description of your Study, Results, Analysis/Conclusion, Impact/Implications, References, and Biographical Sketch. A List of Tables, List of Figures, List of Abbreviations, and Appendices are required if those elements are present.
4. **Incorrect line spacing: 3 single blank line spaces** always follow a **major heading.** To achieve 3 single lines spaces while your text is set to double spacing, hit enter once between two lines of text. 3 single blank line spaces separate 1st order subdivisions, and 1st order to 2nd order subdivisions. **1 single blank line space** (double-spacing) separates 2nd order and subsequent order subdivisions. Some versions of MS Word will add extra space after headings and between paragraphs. Go to your tools to locate paragraph spacing and select do not add extra space between paragraphs of the same style. Your text from paragraph to paragraph and from subdivision headings to text should be consistently double-spaced. You may follow your specific professional style guide if desired.
5. **Leaders and page numbers** are not formatted in the **Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures.** Wavy margins and uneven leaders are unacceptable. Do **not** manually enter leaders; they must be formatted.
6. **Page numbers and headings** listed in the **Table of Contents, List of Figures, and List of Tables** are incorrect. The page numbers and headings **MUST** exactly match, including capping.
7. **Cover pages:** Cover pages are **optional** for the References, Appendices, and Biographical Sketch. If you do include cover pages they should not be numbered nor counted.
8. **Hanging headings:** Do **not** leave a heading hanging alone at the bottom of a page, it should go on the next page.
9. **Citations** in the text are **not found** in the reference section and vice versa.
10. **Citations:** If **one author, list that author's name.** If **two authors, must list both names.** If **3 or more authors, use et al.,** from the beginning of your thesis or dissertation. If there are citations with the exact same author(s) and exact same year, list as a, b, c, etc. (example: Smith, 2014a and Smith, 2014b). If a reference has the same lead authors and same year, but different secondary authors, you should list the authors until there is a difference in the citation (example: Smith, Young, et. al., 2015 or Smith, Roberts, et al., 2015). Include initials if you have the same last name author but different first name.
11. **Numbered citations** (if you chose to use this style) are incorrectly formatted. They **must appear in numerical order** in the thesis or dissertation, unless your specific style guide calls for another way to organize them.
12. **Et al.** should **not** be used in the **Reference** section unless your style guide allows. **Leaders usually indicate many authors.**
13. **Tables and figures** should **not** be imbedded in the text. **3 single blank line spaces should separate a table or figure from the text and/or each other, above and below.** If a table and caption appears alone on a page, it should have a 1 inch top page margin. A figure and its caption should be centered vertically on page, if alone on the page. When possible, put entire table or figure and caption on the same page, even if this means moving it to the next page. If the table or figure is larger than one page, mark the next page(s) as continued. If the table of figure takes up the whole page and there is no room for the caption, the caption must go on the preceding page. **Your table or figure caption and/or notes should FULLY explain the meaning of your figure or table. Tables and figures must be self-explanatory.**
14. **Author's name** does not exactly match on signature page, title page, abstract, and biographical sketch. **Your name must exactly match throughout.**
15. **Ignoring spellcheck and grammar suggestions by your Word program.** That squiggly line is usually there for a reason. Make sure you check to see if words are spelled correctly, etc.