

STEVE WALTON

THE HOME STRETCH: HANDLING YOUR 'LAST YEAR' AND FINAL VIVA

**THINKING ABOUT
THE PROJECT**

WHAT IS A PHD?

- ▶ People get PhDs, not theses
- ▶ Setting the bar at the right level
 - ▶ Your thesis is not going to change the world
 - ▶ Your thesis is at a different level to a Master's essay or dissertation

YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

- ▶ What is your central research question, stated in one sentence?
 - ▶ how is... what are... what could... what should...
 - ▶ should require an answer which can be **demonstrated with evidence**
 - ▶ should have a clear **scope**
 - ▶ *According to Barth's Church Dogmatics iii/3 and iv/4*
in what way(s) do hamsters experience reconciliation with God through Christ?
 - ▶ a thesis is not a textbook: it is an **argument**

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

**WHAT IS YOUR
RESEARCH QUESTION?**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: BRINGING IT HOME

- ▶ Where are you and what needs doing to finish?
- ▶ Mapping what you have: write it down
 - ▶ use current thesis outline
 - ▶ identify what you have drafted
 - ▶ identify what you need to do to fill in the rest
 - ▶ identify the resources you need to do that
 - ▶ do a risk assessment: what could go wrong?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: BRINGING IT HOME

- ▶ Where are you and what needs doing to finish?
- ▶ Mapping what you have: write it down
- ▶ Tracking your progress
 - ▶ Kanban

Ready

Doing

Waiting

Done

Study of 'follow'
words use by
Luke

Read theological
lexicons on words

Read articles on
words (get
articles from
library)

Outline
discussion and
write

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: BRINGING IT HOME

- ▶ Where are you and what needs doing to finish?
- ▶ Mapping what you have: write it down
- ▶ Tracking your progress
 - ▶ Kanban
 - ▶ using a spreadsheet
 - ▶ setting aims on writing days: what pace do you normally write at?

**THINKING ABOUT
YOURSELF**

KNOW YOURSELF!

- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and writer?

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

**WHICH PARTS OF MY PROJECT
ARE HARDEST/EASIEST FOR
ME? WHY (IN EACH CASE)?**

KNOW YOURSELF!

- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and writer?
- ▶ Recognise your tendency in assessing your work
 - ▶ being your own harshest critic
 - ▶ being cautious: JOMA (just one more article)
 - ▶ being your own cheerleader
 - ▶ the importance of people outside you

KNOW YOURSELF!

- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and writer?
- ▶ Recognise your tendency in assessing your work
- ▶ Being reflective about yourself in relation to your research: journalling weekly
 - ▶ what happened this week? one paragraph
 - ▶ what did I learn? 2–5 bullet points
 - ▶ what was difficult? one paragraph
 - ▶ what do I need to do next? one paragraph
 - ▶ what are my strengths as a researcher? 3–6 bullet points

WHO IS SUPPORTING YOU?

- ▶ Your supervisor
 - ▶ changing nature of relationship in the home stretch
 - ▶ the vital importance of good communication
- ▶ Your family and friends
 - ▶ being open and honest with them
- ▶ Who prays for and with you?

SOME MYTHS AND DANGERS

- ▶ more hours, more done
- ▶ self-care is for self-obsessed millenials
 - ▶ your workspace
 - ▶ your diet
 - ▶ your sleep
- ▶ remember: **you are not your thesis**

Rest

WHY YOU GET MORE DONE
WHEN YOU WORK LESS



Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

**THINKING ABOUT
YOUR WRITING**

GATHERING AND EDITING WORDS

- ▶ Overcoming resistance
 - ▶ remember your 'why?'
 - ▶ good habits

GATHERING AND EDITING WORDS

- ▶ Overcoming resistance
- ▶ Separate writing and editing as processes
 - ▶ avoiding the 'perfect sentence vortex'
 - ▶ you can't edit fresh air
- ▶ Two kinds of editing
 - ▶ structural editing: getting it into good shape
 - ▶ filling gaps
 - ▶ making transitions clear: start and end of chapters/sections
 - ▶ your thesis is a report on your research, not the research

GATHERING AND EDITING WORDS

- ▶ Overcoming resistance
- ▶ Separate writing and editing as processes
- ▶ Two kinds of editing
 - ▶ structural editing: getting it into good shape
 - ▶ stylistic editing: making it beautiful
 - ▶ those pesky footnotes!
 - ▶ consistency of capitalisation

MAKING A COHERENT ARGUMENT

- ▶ **Tiny texts**—in one sentence each write about...
 - ▶ **situate**: what others say about the issue your thesis addresses
 - ▶ **focus**: what your thesis addresses
 - ▶ **report**: what your data says, and how you gathered it
 - ▶ **argue**: what you are saying about your research question
 - ▶ **significance**: what does your thesis add to the field? why does your research answer matter?
- ▶ then expand each answer to one paragraph: here's the first draft of your abstract

MAKING A COHERENT ARGUMENT

- ▶ Reverse outlines
 - ▶ identify the key idea of each paragraph
 - ▶ paste these sentences into a new document
 - ▶ review the order and rearrange to make a logical flow
 - ▶ review the original draft, and move material under the sentences in the new document
 - ▶ group related content
 - ▶ does this have a good 'storyline' running through?
 - ▶ hypothesis/question?
 - ▶ organisation of answer?
 - ▶ outcome/findings

SHARPENING THE ARGUMENT

- ▶ Editing for clarity
 - ▶ remove most adverbs, esp. 'very'
 - ▶ edit contractions: it is, not it's; do not, not don't; etc.
 - ▶ remove colloquialisms or slang: formal writing
 - ▶ use jargon where it saves words and is clear
 - ▶ define if necessary on first use
- ▶ Editing for style and consistency
 - ▶ remember the Aberdeen requirements
 - ▶ make friends with your style guide: SBL, CMS, MLA...

**THINKING ABOUT
THE VIVA**

THE PURPOSE(S) OF THE VIVA

- ▶ To establish ownership
- ▶ To establish your knowledge of the wider field
- ▶ To clarify points and arguments

KNOW YOUR THESIS

- ▶ Read and re-read it carefully
- ▶ Be able to summarise
 - ▶ its point: one sentence, one paragraph, one page
 - ▶ the arguments for this point
 - ▶ its substantial original contribution to knowledge
- ▶ Be ready to defend your thesis
- ▶ What implications has your thesis?

KNOW YOUR LANGUAGES

- ▶ Be ready to translate anything not in English
- ▶ Be ready to show ability in the relevant languages
 - ▶ scholarly literature in modern languages
 - ▶ relevant ancient languages

KNOW YOUR EXAMINERS

- ▶ Review what they've written
- ▶ Be ready to respond where you've disagreed with them
- ▶ Be ready for them to press you hard
 - ▶ but don't assume that's a bad thing

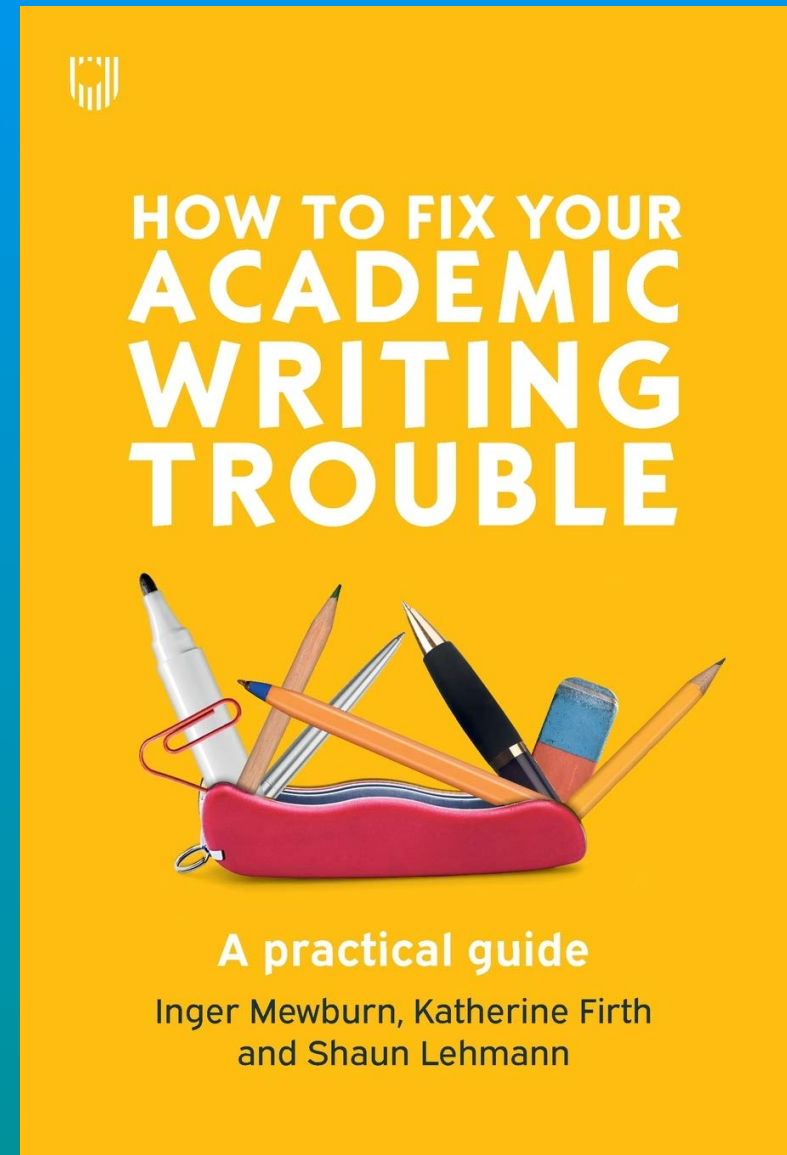
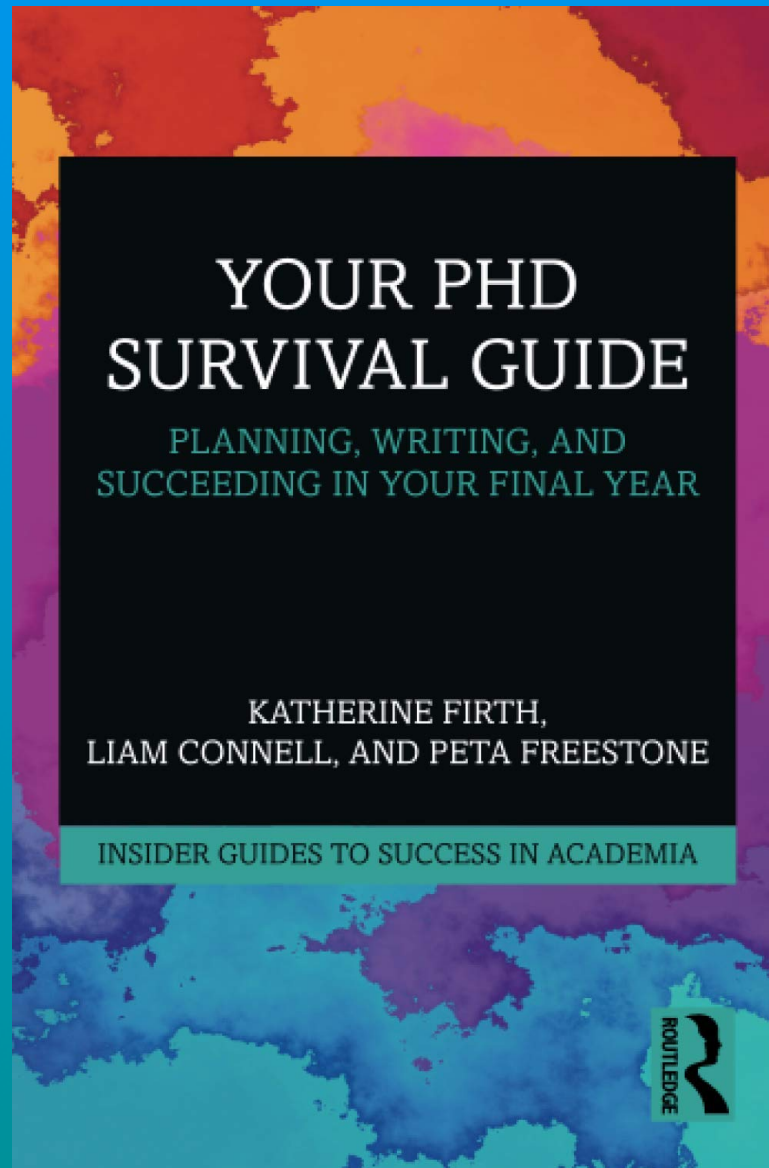
KNOW HOW TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS

- ▶ the examiners want you to talk about the thesis—they are not (normally) setting trick questions
- ▶ be succinct, but not monosyllabic!
- ▶ balance attack and defence
- ▶ be willing to concede a point
- ▶ draw on your thesis
 - ▶ don't be afraid to repeat what's there
 - ▶ draw on your primary and secondary sources in answers—name arguments, scholars, texts, resources
- ▶ be ready for the final question

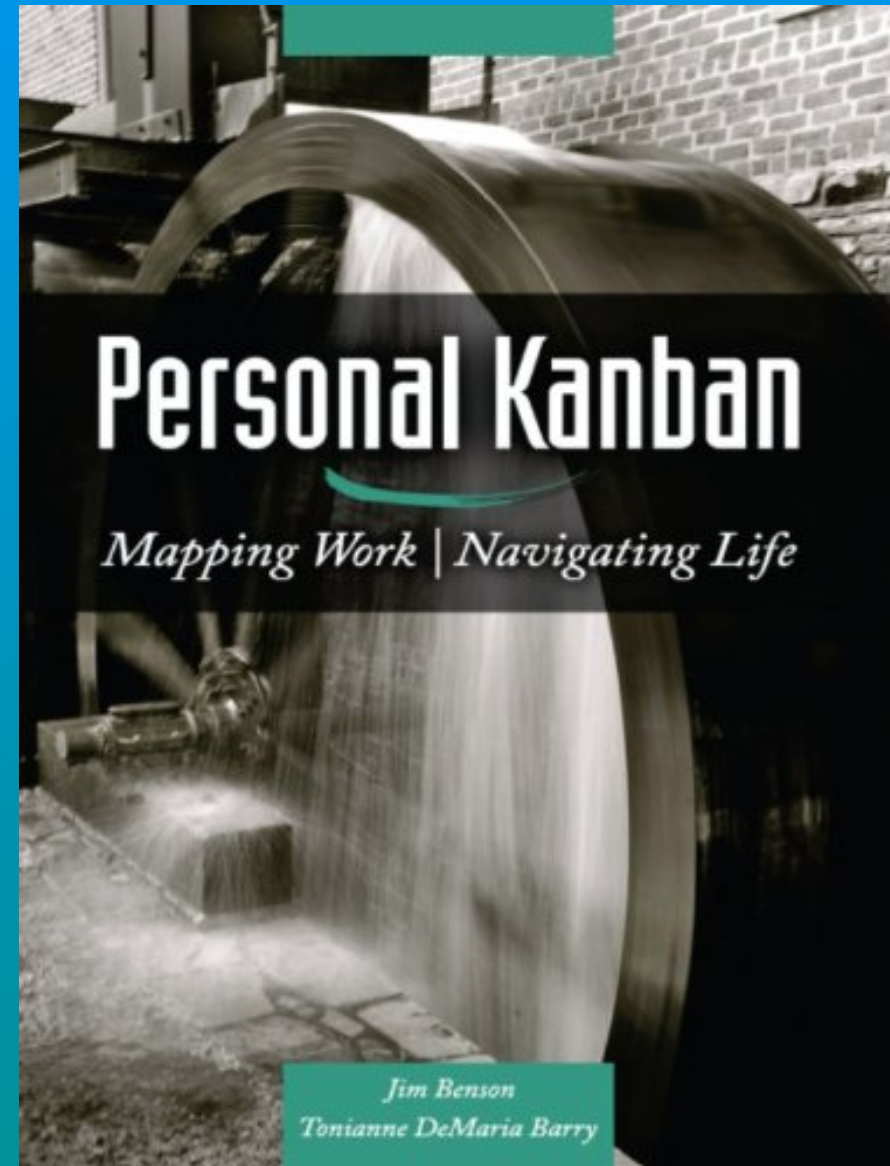
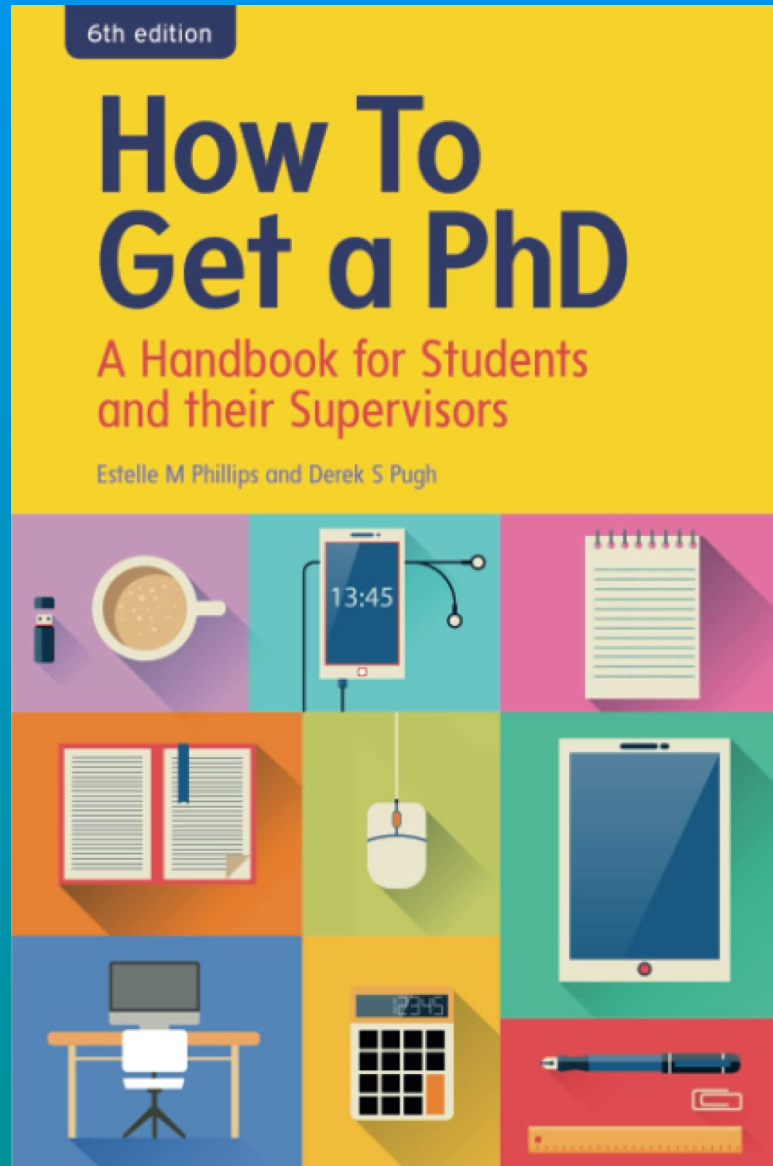
KNOW YOURSELF

- ▶ feelings
- ▶ practice viva
- ▶ sleep
- ▶ arrive in good time
- ▶ pray and ask others to pray

FURTHER READING



FURTHER READING



THREE BLOGS ON RESEARCH DEGREE WORK

- ▶ <https://researchinsiders.blog>
- ▶ <https://thesiswhisperer.com>
- ▶ <https://patthomson.net>

**YOU CAN GET
THESE SLIDES FROM
ACTS AND MORE**

[HTTP://STEVEWALTON.INFO](http://steve walton.info)