Checking in with Yourself About Progress and Pace

Setting regular, achievable goals is one of the most common pieces of advice given to scholars working on their thesis or dissertation. But how do you know if you are proceeding as quickly as you should be? Use this self-assessment checklist to check in with yourself about the pace of your thesis or dissertation work:

Am I moving forward?

Is my pace accelerating or decelerating? Does it feel like the right pace?

What speeds me up? What slows me down?

Can I maintain this pace?

Will this pace allow me to finish when I need to?

Am I writing as much or more than I am deleting or editing?

Am I stuck on the same chapter or section? Why?

How much can I write in a certain period of time? How much do I have left to write?

Have I checked in with my advisor about my progress?

Do I have a timetable or schedule? Is it reasonable?

Use your responses to these questions to honestly assess your progress and pace. Are you on track, just feeling low in confidence for some reason? Are you off track? What needs to change to get you back on track?

Another technique you might use to assess your personal obstacles is to write down every excuse you could make for not working on your dissertation, then write a rebuttal for each excuse. Write these excuses and rebuttals on notecards, and keep them with you. When you encounter an excuse, use your notecard to remind yourself of your rebuttal, and encourage yourself to prioritize your scholarship.

For example:

- **Excuse:** I don’t have time to work today.
- **Rebuttal:** I have a limited amount of time, but I can always start something and finish later. I’ll feel better if I do some work, even if it’s just a little bit.

Adapted from:

*The Dissertation Journey* by Carol M. Roberts

*Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* by Joan Bolker, Ed.D