

1. Make sure to give yourself time to write during your most energetic time of day. Do not sap this peak time by doing laundry, meeting students, or talking on the phone. Also understand that you probably can do SOMETHING even in 15 minutes. You can jot down the three main points of chapter 3, for example!
2. Roll the boulder downhill rather than uphill whenever you can. If chapter 2 is next but you can't do it, move to chapter 5 where you're full of energy. Find where the energy and momentum live and go there.
3. Understand that writing is selfish and thesis writing is super-selfish and that if you're worried about it, you are *not* the kind of person who will abandon all your ethical commitments to others in the process. You need to be selfish for contained periods to get this writing done. You will be much, much nicer to everyone in your life if you make time to write.
4. Forget about its importance and its bigness. Write one paragraph and make it the worst thing you've ever done. (Were you successful?)
5. Address its importance and bigness. Imagine it whole by writing a review of it after it becomes a book.
6. Another version: write the introduction to the thesis, not having written the thesis.
7. Ask people to ask you what your thesis is about. If you really can't answer, this is important information!
8. Pretend that someone really competent in your class is writing today's segment. Channel that person for the day.
9. Begin your "what I wrote when I was supposed to be doing my thesis" piece. My friends published Harlequins, wrote poetry, kept up a healthy correspondence—all while they were supposed to be dissertating. Keep this one on a tight leash, though!
10. Give yourself as much time as you can AWAY from each chapter so that you can see it with new eyes. Play bait and switch with the work: work on the oldest thing while the newest one ferments.
11. Court the muse and yourself as its servant. Make writing something you fantasize about when you are not doing it. Lavish treats on yourself for doing it: chocolate, long walk, new book, sticky notes. Reward yourself well for each paragraph, page, chapter written. "Well" means in ways that don't hamper your writing but that fuel it by making you feel happy and good.
12. Use other media. I loved butcher paper and markers because I couldn't get my head around the ideas on a 9x11 sheet: I needed a great big map. Shift to longhand, to markers, paint it, draw it, dance it. Unleash the other side of your brain to play and work on the thesis.
13. Make a commitment to give someone something. If you miss the deadline, do not apologize unduly, but use the deadline. Promise to give a friend a chapter; promise to give your chair a chapter. If you give it to your chair, make sure it's double-spaced and mostly proofread but communicate with him/her about troubled drafts. S/he may prefer you turn them over and keep writing.
14. Use other deadlines to understand the writing and its problems better. Submit an abstract based on one chapter to a conference. It will make you write it in condensed form.
15. Offer to talk based on a chapter—to a professor's class, to a group of students, to a local club. If you have to talk about it, you'll figure out (fast!) what you really need to say. Think of it as a public service. What does your audience really need to know?
16. Piggyback on 13: Figure out what you have to say that is so important for someone else to hear that it will allow you to overcome fatigue and fear to get it said.
17. Love your topic, and if you don't love it, change it. Writing a thesis is hard! Have a really good reason for doing it.