

TOP TEN FORMATTING MISTAKES
The University of Alabama Graduate School

Below are the ten most common errors found within thesis/dissertation manuscripts. Review each carefully, as complying with the following ten guidelines will save you much time during the review process. Each of these issues is addressed in the Submission Guide; however, this list addresses the most common errors that deviate from the submission guide.

- (1) **TITLE:** Your title must be at least three lines and must form an upside-down pyramid, i.e., the top line of the title is the longest, followed by the second line, and the third line must be the shortest.
- (2) **COMMITTEE MEMBERS' NAMES:** Do not put “Dr.,” “Professor,” or any other honorific/degree before or after your committee members’ names. The only indicator you may use is “COMMITTEE CHAIR” behind the chair’s name (who should be listed first) and “COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR” behind the co-chair’s name, who should be listed second.
- (3) **YOUR NAME:** On the title page, put a double space beneath your name and above the committee members’ names, but put a single space between the committee members’ names.
- (4) **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vs ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** Both of these spellings of “ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS” are correct; however, students often use one spelling on the ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS preliminary page, but a different spelling on the CONTENTS page. Make sure you use the same spelling throughout the document, though it does not matter which you choose.
- (5) **REFERENCES:** All lines of a reference entry must be on the same page, i.e., you cannot have two lines of a reference entry on the bottom of a page and one line of the entry at the top of another page. Also, make sure each reference entry is single spaced but with a double space between separate entries.
- (6) **CHAPTER HEADINGS:** Make sure chapter headings are consistent, i.e., do not have “CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION” but then “CHAPTER 2–LITERATURE REVIEW” (one uses a colon, the other uses an en dash). Also, make sure that your spelling and punctuation matches between CONTENTS entries and the chapter headings in the general document.
- (7) **CONTENTS:** No bolding or italics in CONTENTS, even though you may bold/italicize headings in the general document.
- (8) **CONTENTS/LISTS PAGES:** Entries in this section that are longer than one line *must* be single spaced; however, put a double space *between* separate entries.
- (9) **TABLE/FIGURE CAPTIONS:** Single space table and figure captions in the general document.
- 10) **ORPHANING LINES:** Do not have only one line of a paragraph on a page or below a heading on a page; make sure at least two or more lines from a paragraph are on a page. Otherwise, bring the “orphaned” or “widowed” line to the next page.