

10 Tips on Timelines

Your timeline shows readers how you will accomplish your plan for research and/or writing during the funding period. It shows in summary graphic form the sequence and schedule for your writing and/or research activities. Not all funders require a timeline, but you might still want to include one in your proposal as a concise way to explain and summarize your narrative presentation of the plan.

Timelines for research grants show the sequence and range of activities over the course of your project. Those for dissertation completion fellowships indicate progress on the dissertation to date and the series of activities that will culminate in final submission of your dissertation.

The ACLS website includes [sample timelines](#) from successful applications to their dissertation completion fellowship program. As they note, timelines can vary considerably by field and by individual project and they can be presented in a number of ways. The timeline is typically a list or table, but you can format it in any way that will be clear to read and attractive. The ACLS sample timeline formats can easily be adopted for research timelines. You can also find sample research timelines in our Grant Proposal Archive, [accessible through Canvas](#), (e.g., proposals by Alex Borucki and Lena Suk [both applications for CLIR] and by Tawni Tidwell [NSF]). The archive's completion fellowship section also includes additional timeline samples.

The following ten tips supplement these models with general advice for crafting a clear and convincing timeline; the last five are particularly relevant for timelines for dissertation completion fellowships.

Tips for All Timelines

1. Like other components of your application (proposal, personal statement, budget, etc.), the timeline does more than convey content. It is also a presentation of self that should help build reviewers' confidence that you are a careful scholar, know what you are doing, and can actually accomplish what you propose.
2. Format and style matter! Do not present your timeline in a table or graphic that is hard to read or confusing. Make it clear, attractive, and compelling.
3. Be sure the timeline covers the full project. It should include everything to be accomplished with the funding requested, but not include other activities unrelated to the research or dissertation completion. Don't add new research to the timeline if it is not already mentioned and justified in the proposal itself.
4. The timeline should coordinate with your narrative research/writing plan and show the location, duration, and activities involved in each stage. It should give a sense of process so reviewers can imagine what you will be doing at each phase and your progress throughout the project.

5. Be sure the sequence in your timeline makes analytical and practical sense (e.g., don't say you plan to do research for a particular chapter when the timeline shows you will have already completed writing it; don't schedule coding before you will have done the interviews or collected the survey results to be coded.)

Tips Especially for Dissertation Completion Timelines

6. For a dissertation completion timeline, describe the number of chapters and overall dissertation structure, including the introduction and conclusion as chapters. Provide provisional chapter titles if possible and indicate progress made to date. In other words, present a full plan for writing, revising, and completing the dissertation.

7. Allow a reasonable time to write and revise chapters. Don't seem to be stretching the schedule out; don't propose a rate of work that is not feasible.

8. Be consistent in your time estimates for writing and revising chapters or explain why some will take less or more time. If you think you will need 6-8 weeks to write each chapter, don't list some as taking 4 months without further explanation.

In some fields, for instance, one might need a short period of further research in relation to a particular chapter (e.g. to analyze texts, do a followup interview, or make a brief archival visit to check particular sources). Just give a clear picture of what you are doing and how it all fits together and leads to completion.

9. Build in interaction with your advisor, committee, and relevant others, and time for final revisions. Be reasonable with these time estimates too. Don't assume your committee will provide feedback in just a week or two – reviewers will laugh at you.

10. Be sure your completion is defined relative to the university's submission dates for graduation. For a May graduation at Emory, for instance, you typically have to submit your completed, approved dissertation by early April. The [guidelines for completion](#) on the Laney Graduate School website outline the process and dates.