

Succeeding in Academia – Writing Successful Academic Papers

COLLEGE of
AGRICULTURE *and*
APPLIED SCIENCES
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Today

- Writing academic/research papers
- Writing and writing guides
- Academic paper structures
- Strategies and inclusions by section
- Formatting and style guides
- Citation requirements
- What is Plagiarism?
- APA formatting



The background image shows a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. A document is open on the laptop screen, displaying several paragraphs of text. The text is a placeholder or filler text, consisting of multiple lines of random characters and words. The document is framed by a white border, and the overall scene is set against a dark background.

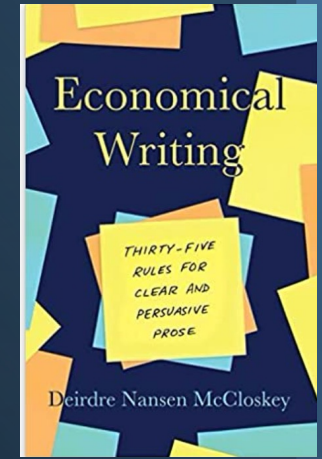
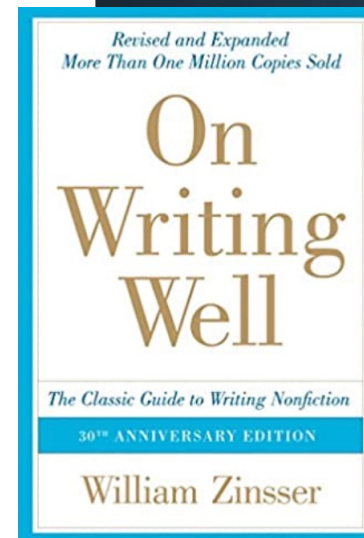
Writing Research Papers

- A good research paper
 - Makes you forget you are reading a paper
 - Takes you on a tour of the questions asked and the answers found
 - Justifies why the answers are robust (apply to a broad range of data)
 - Discusses what can be learned from the results for policy, business, etc.
- Suggestions
 - Read lots of academic papers, both good and bad to recognize differences
 - Read things you enjoy reading, like novels
 - Read press such as the Economist, the New Yorker, or similar for well written examples



Writing Guides

- The Elements of Style
 - Strunk and White
- On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction
 - William Zinsser
- On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft
 - Steven King
- Economical Writing: 35 Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose
 - Deirdre McCloskey



Actively Write

- Write and embrace mediocre or bad writing
 - Just write, you can improve upon a first draft, you can't work on or improve something that doesn't exist
- Writing is rewriting
 - Rewrite often to improve a sentence or paragraph
 - Rewriting the paper abstract and introduction important
 - Consider strong grammar, using fewer words, and clarity
 - Short meaningful sentences are better than long drawn-out sentences
- Write every day
 - Use every opportunity to write to improve your writing, even emails
 - Write clearly and concisely
 - Writing in a daily journal may help



Academic Paper Structure

- Title
- Abstract
- Sections
 - Introduction
 - Literature review/background (often part of the introduction)
 - Data and descriptive stats (sometimes goes after empirical framework/modeling)
 - Theoretical framework (may not be needed if using common theory)
 - Empirical framework/modeling
 - Results and discussion
 - Summary and conclusions
- References
- Tables and figures (if any)
 - Often here at submission, then placed within text at publication
- Appendix (if any)



Academic Paper Structure Cont.

- This structure is the most common but can be different per journal requirements
- When you chose an appropriate journal (we will discuss this later) check the submission requirements for instructions on section titles and order required
- Many journals do not require a specific format at the submission stage
- Some journals require all formatting guidelines (structure, references, equations, etc.) to be followed at submission



Title, Abstract, & Introduction

- Most important marketing tools for a paper
 - Especially for empirical papers, which don't advance theory or methodology
- Title
 - Very important to catch the readers attention
 - What makes a good title is difficult to point out "I know it when I see it..."
 - Suggested do not's
 - Emphasize the technique used...semiparametric, non-parametric evidence, etc.
 - Long titles
 - Inverse relationship between paper title length and the number of times read
 - Don't try to be clever/cute
 - If you do make sure it makes sense, appeals to many people, uses common sayings or adages
 - Must perfectly fit your paper



Introduction Section

- After the title and the abstract, the introduction is where the reader will decide.....
 - If the paper is interesting enough to keep reading
 - Whether the paper is of good enough quality for them to believe your findings
 - Editor's decision to send the paper out for review or not, desk reject
 - Very important and should be rewritten/worked on often
 - Should clearly state what the paper does and how it does it
- Write the introduction before the abstract as its easier to write the abstract once you have the introduction written
- Start writing the introduction when there are empirical results available
- Follow Keith Head's introduction formula



Keith Head's Introduction Formula

- Hook (1-2 paragraphs)
 - Something that grabs the readers attention
 - A good hook relates to the real world
 - A bad hook appeals to the literature, long listing of studies and gaps
- Research question (1 paragraph)
 - States the research question as clearly as possible
 - Use the actual question and 1 or 2 other sentences
- Antecedents
 - Relate your work to the 5-10 closest studies (literature)
 - Might be recent work if lots of activity on the topic, or older if few studies on the topic
 - Tell the intellectual history of the topic in an interesting way
 - Not, so and so found this, so and so found that.... boring



Head's Introduction Formula Cont.

- Value-added
 - This needs to shine
 - What is your contribution and how does it change the world?
 - Important contributions – should have at least one
 - Examples
 - Improve internal validity through a better identification strategy
 - Improving external validity with data more applicable to real world scenarios
 - Small methodological improvement
- Roadmap
 - Road map to your paper....”The remainder of the article is organized as follows....”
 - Provide one for each paper, it can be removed later if desired by reviewers or editors



Some Definitions

- Internal validity – study structure
 - A measure of how well a study is conducted and how accurately its results reflect the studied group
 - Establishes a trustworthy cause and effect relationship
 - Methods to improve internal validity
 - Random selection, strict protocols, treatment and control groups, etc.
- External validity – universality of results
 - The applicability of the study findings to the real world
 - How well the outcomes of a research study can be applied to other settings
 - Methods to improve external validity
 - Field experiments, specific inclusion criteria, replication, etc.





Other Alternatives

- Sahm's suggested Introduction formula
 - Motivation
 - Research question
 - Main contribution
 - Method
 - Findings
 - Robustness checks
 - Roadmap
- Provides more detail on the value-added section

Robustness Checks

- Researcher examines how certain “core” regression coefficient estimates behave when the regression specification is modified by adding or removing regressors
- Regression example
 - $Income = 3Xeducation + 1Xparentsincome + 2Xgender + error$
 - The 3,1, and 2 are coefficient estimates
 - If we add in say *stateofresidence*, or take out *gender*, if we still get 3 for *education* and 1 or *parentsincome*, then the estimates are robust



Other Alternatives Cont.

- Evan's suggested Introduction formula
 - Motivation (1-2 paragraphs)
 - Research question (1 paragraph)
 - Empirical approach (1 paragraph)
 - Results (3-4 paragraphs)
 - Value added (1-3 paragraphs)
 - Robustness checks, policy relevance, limitations (optional)
 - Roadmap (1 paragraph)



Abstract

- **Very important** in encouraging the reader to continue, i.e. read the introduction
- If the paper is read, it will be published and cited
 - Researchers often cite papers for which they have only read the abstract...ya crazy, but true!
- Use the first sentence of your hook, research question, and value-added sections of your introduction
 - Should be readable/clear to any college educated person
 - Policy makers, business leaders/managers, college students and importantly...your peers
- Most journals have an abstract word count maximum



Literature Review (or Background) Section

- Literature Review Section
 - Required as part of an M.S. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation
 - Demonstrate the student is familiar with the literature she/he is working with
 - Some journals require this section but not all
 - Bellemare (“Doing Economics”) suggests incorporating this section into the introduction
 - Saves the reader time (5-10 most applicable articles already discussed in the intro)
 - Need to be a very good writer to pull off a compelling story in a literature review
 - Best written by senior scholars who have been thinking about the literature at length
- Background Section
 - Useful when a topic requires a significant amount of background knowledge
 - Details of legislation the reader needs to keep in mind
 - Industry descriptions
 - Describe what the reader needs to know, no more



Data, Modeling, & Results Sections

- These are highly influenced by the type of research undertaken
- A theoretical modelling section may not be needed if doing applied work, if using a common model
- Often the empirical modelling section is presented before the data section
- Read pages 8-25 in “Doing Economics” for examples/details on these sections
 - Describing data
 - Formatting tables
 - Robustness checks



Summary & Conclusions Section

- Often called “concluding remarks” or simply “conclusions”
- Summary
 - Summarize the paper
 - Different version than in the abstract and introduction
 - What are the papers contributions or gaps it fills?
- Limitations
 - Detail the limitations of the paper
 - Geographic specific, data collection issues, etc.
- Real-world implications
 - Detail implications for policy, business strategy, etc. if applicable
 - Point out potential costs and benefits
 - Identify clear winners and losers based upon the results
- Future research
 - What could be done differently? Extended?
 - If writing a follow up paper, set the stage here



Formatting Papers – Style Guides

- Style guides
 - Used to make common elements consistent across documents written by multiple authors
- Typical rules/guidelines
 - Grammar and language
 - Headings
 - Line spacing
 - Equation placement/formatting
 - Font type and size
 - Citation formatting
 - Reference formatting

Reference for the next six slides is the Purdue Owl at:
<https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html>



Common Style Guides

Style	Usage
Associated Press Style (AP)	used by journalists and other news & media writers
Chicago (sometimes written Chicago/Turabian, or CMoS)	used in the humanities
Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers Style (IEEE)	used in engineering & computer science
American Medical Association (AMA)	used in nursing & other medical fields
Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)	used in computing and information technology fields
The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)	used in mechanical engineering



Citations (Properly Citing Sources)

- An attribution of someone else's writing, work, ideas, videos, etc.
- In text citations
 - According to Curtis et al. (2020), Utah consumers don't like organic foods.
 - Previous studies show that organic foods are preferred by consumers with strong health concerns (Curtis et al., 2020).
- Reference list
 - Curtis, K., Drugova, T., and Reeve, J. (2020). Consumer Preferences for Labeled Fruit Products in Utah." *Journal of All Things Organic*, 28(6): 25-28.

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Citation Requirements

- The following must be cited/credited:
 - Words or ideas presented in a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, website, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium
 - Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person (face-to-face, over the phone, in writing, etc.)
 - When you copy the exact words or a unique phrase
 - When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials
 - When you reuse or repost any digital media, including images, audio, video, or other media



Citation Requirements

- The following do not need to be cited/credited:
 - Writing your own lived experiences
 - Observations, insights, thoughts, or conclusions about a subject
 - When writing up your own results obtained through research
 - When using your own artwork, digital photographs, video, audio, etc.
 - When using "common knowledge"
 - Such as folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, and historical events
 - Generally, common knowledge is information that someone finds undocumented in at least five credible sources
 - When using generally accepted facts (including facts that are accepted within certain communities)
 - Pollution is bad for the environment
 - In the field of composition studies, "writing is a process" is a generally accepted fact



What is Plagiarism?

- Intentional plagiarism
 - Copying a blog post or stealing an article from the internet
 - Hiring someone to write your paper for you
 - Copying a large section of text from a source without making it clear it isn't yours through quotation marks or proper citation
 - Intentionally failing to cite someone else's work
 - Claim that the ideas and words belong to you
 - It is possible to plagiarize from yourself
 - Yes, using the same materials in multiple papers
- Unintentional plagiarism
 - Not fully understanding the citation system and thus missing key elements of the source attribution
 - Paraphrasing (restating in own words) but accidentally directly quoting words or phrases without realizing
 - In this case there is usually some attribution to the source, but not the right kind (paraphrasing vs quoting)
 - Misattributing a quote or idea to the wrong source
 - Common in larger research projects when dealing with a lot of source material



APA – Style Guide

- APA - Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association
 - Commonly used citation formatting requirement among academic journals
- Required for USU Extension publications
 - References and in text citations
 - See Purdue Owl for full description at <https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html>

Format	Citation examples
Websites	Last name, F. M. (year, Month, Date). Title of page. Site name. URL Price, D. (2018, March 23). <i>Laziness does not exist</i> . Medium. https://humanparts.medium.com/laziness-does-not-exist
Journals and Periodicals	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. <i>Title of Periodical</i> , volume number(issue number), pages. https://doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyy Scruton, R. (1996). The eclipse of listening. <i>The New Criterion</i> , 15(3), 5–13.
Books	Author, A. A. (Year of publication). <i>Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle</i> . Publisher Name. Stoneman, R. (2008). <i>Alexander the Great: A life in legend</i> . Yale University Press.



USU Extension Publications

- USU Extension Writer's Resource

- Style guide
- Citations
- Formatting
- Punctuation and grammar
- Tips for success

- <https://extension.usu.edu/employee/files/writer-resource-revised-2023.pdf>



Next

- March 13: Submitting academic papers and responding to editorial decisions
- March 27: Reviewing manuscripts for journals



Questions?

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