

Guidelines for Writing A Term Paper

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1 Objective / Content

Writing a term paper implies to independently work on a research question in a limited time period. The respective topic should be reduced to its core messages. Please do not simply copy the paper but present it in your own way, explaining the important concepts in own words. This will be a major part of your task. When you copy results or tables from a study, try to focus on the main information, which is relevant for your argument. Do not simply copy and/or discuss all results. It is also your task to search for the literature on the topic and narrow it down according to its relevance. Depending on the specific question, a critical discussion of one or more scientific papers or acquiring and applying empirical/econometric methods on your own can be a main objective of your work.

When writing your paper you need to provide evidence for every claim you make (see section 3). It is possible that previous research provides different approaches, results etc. In your work you should mention the most important facts supporting each argument.

In the case of empirical papers the assessment of your work does not depend on the obtained results (for instance, an insignificant result is not per se negative), but on the way you obtained and documented them.

2 Scope and Structure

The term paper for a seminar should contain around 30.000 characters (i.e., approx. 15 pages) without figures and tables (using a reasonable font size—see also Section 4).

Your term paper should more or less correspond to the given structure:

- a) The **front page** should include at least the following information: name of the seminar, title, supervisor of the work as well as information on the author (e.g. name, matriculation number, address, program of studies and number of semesters).
- b) The **text component** begins with an **introduction**. Here you should highlight the importance of the topic and specify the research question. Already here you can mention scientific literature and provide an outlook on important results. At the end of the introduction explain the structure of the remaining paper.

Regarding the structure of the **main part** there are different possibilities depending on the respective research question. In case of empirical papers it is preferable to first explain the method and data used and then describe the actual analysis and the results. For very extensive results it can be appropriate to shift the complete description to the appendix and restrict the focus of the text component only to the essential parts.

In the **conclusions** you should briefly summarize the research question, the applied approach and the principal results. Often also a critical appraisal/discussion of the work as well as an outlook are essential items of the conclusions. Depending on the research question the critical appraisal/discussion can be so important that you may consider creating a special section for it.

When structuring the text component you should also keep in mind:

Divide the text component in two or three levels. Already due to the structure of a paper the reader gets an impression on how the author has understood and handled the topic. Consequently, the structure and composition of the paper should be meaningful, for instance by using section headings that concisely describe the content. Main and sub-chapter should be divided logically, applying the following rule: at one level one sub-item needs to be followed by at least one other sub-item, as for instance there has to follow 2.2.2 after 2.2.1; 2.2.1 cannot be used on its own.

For information on the correct citation format see chapter 3; on formal basics (as font size, footnote etc.) see section 4.

- c) In the **bibliography** all cited sources need to be listed. But do not mention any source that you are not citing in your paper. Information on the notation of sources is provided in section 3.
- d) In the **appendix** you can summarize further information, but you need to explicitly refer to it in the text (page number, numbering etc.).

3 Citation and Bibliography

For every thought, result, view and opinion that is adopted from others either word for word (direct quotation) or in an analogous sense (indirect quotation), you need to provide evidence in the text component or the footnotes. In doing so assign the foreign thoughts to the respective author that expressed/wrote down it the first (which is not always easy to do). Citing lecture notes is not possible.

Services as Wikipedia can be helpful for general search purposes, but citations from those sources are not acceptable.

Evidence given in the text component and appendix needs to contain not only the source but also the year of publication and the explicit page reference. The latter does not apply to web pages, interviews or similar.

Examples:

- One author
... (Stock 1987, p. 1036).
- Two authors; citation also refers to following page
According to Stock and Watson (2008, p. 364f)...
- Three or more authors; citation also refers to the following pages
... (Stock *et al.* 2002, p. 518ff).

You need to provide sources also for graphs and charts by indicating the source just below the respective element ("Source:..." or "According to source:..." or "Source: own graph/chart.")

In case different publications of the same author and from the same year of publication are cited, the year of publication needs to be specified in the text and bibliography by adding a lowercase letter for the matter of distinction (e.g. "2008a").

In the bibliography you need to summarize all cited sources while paying attention to use consistent terms in both the text and the bibliography. Arrange the sources in alphabetical order. The exact citation differs according to following types of sources:

- **Monographs:**

Surname, first name initials of further names if any (year): title, if any edition, publishing, place of publication.

Example:

Stock, James H.; Watson, Mark W. (2008): Introduction to Econometrics: Brief Edition, Pearson, Boston.

- **Journal article:**

Surname, first name initials of further names if any (year): title of the article, name of the journal, year, issue number, page reference.

Example:

Levine, Ross; Renelt, David (1992): A Sensitivity Analysis of Cross-Country Growth Regressions, *The American Economic Review*, 82(4), 942-963.

- **Article in anthology:**

Surname, first name initials of further names if any (year): title of the article, in: Surname, forename initials of further forenames if any (editor), title, edition if any, volume, place of publication, page reference.

Example:

Maddala, Gangadharrao S. (1986): Disequilibrium, self-selection, and switching models, in: Griliches, Zvi and Intriligator, Michael D. (editor), *Handbook of Econometrics*, volume 3, Amsterdam, p. 1633-1688.

- **Web page:**

Surname, first name, initials of further names if any: title. URL (request date)

Example:

Ringle, Christian M.: Smart PLS. <http://www.smartpls.de> (20.04.2011)

When citing interviews add the date when the interview was taken instead of the year of publication.

4 Guidelines for Formatting

Regarding the formatting stick to following guidelines:

- appropriate font type and size, e.g. Times New Roman 12pt or Arial 11pt
- line spacing 1.5 times
- visible page references

- leave a sufficient border, e.g. interior 3.5cm, exterior 2.5cm, upper 2.0cm, and lower 2.5cm

In case of graphs and charts use a font size of at least 8pt for the references. Besides that there are no other formatting guidelines. Just make sure that everything is readable and looks reasonably good!

It is possible to use footnotes if explanations or side notes would be rather disturbing within the text. However, you should use footnotes only if it is really necessary and keep them short.

5 Information on the Technical Implementation

You are free to use any **text processing program** as MS Word or OpenOffice-Writer to write your paper. For various reasons it can be preferable to use **L^AT_EX**:

- For a frequent use of formulas L^AT_EX is a good fit.
- It also helps you by automatically numbering figures and graphs and by creating registers.
- Together with additional programs as JabRef it is simple to administer the used literature and to automatically create a bibliography.
- The resulting documents offer a high quality.

A disadvantage of L^AT_EX is the inconvenience of typing the text, because it is necessary to program the layout. But this disadvantage mostly vanishes when using the freeware program **LyX** (www.lyx.org) that offers the user a simple handling similar to common text processing programs. A usual document can be easily created also with limited knowledge of L^AT_EX-commands since LyX is directly translating the formatting to L^AT_EX. Especially if you will be working multiple times with L^AT_EX in the future, a familiarization with LyX and L^AT_EX is highly recommended.

A good (and free) software for collecting and organizing your literature and automatically including references and bibliographies is Zotero. More details here: <http://www.zotero.org/>

6 Further Reading

- Chochrane, John H. (2005): Writing Tips for Ph.D. Students
https://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf (October 23, 2018)
- Nikolov, Plamen (2013): Writing Tips For Economics Research Papers
<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~pnikolov/resources/writingtips.pdf>
(October 23, 2018)