

1. Aim for concision. Most research papers should be no more than 40 pages double-spaced (inclusive of all references, tables and figures). It is difficult to hold a reader's attention in a long paper. To reduce text, try removing a paragraph from every section, a sentence from every paragraph and a word from every sentence. If your paper is long because it contains multiple ideas and multiple analyses, perhaps you should consider breaking it into two papers.
2. Your paper must have a hook and *clearly* answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the issue or key research question? (introduction)
 - b. Why is it important? What gap do you fill? What is your contribution (introduction)
 - c. How do you study it? (model, data and methods; your empirical strategy)
 - d. What do you learn? (results)
 - e. Who should care and why? (conclusions)
3. Include a brief abstract that clearly communicates a-d.
4. Choose your title carefully. Make sure it communicates clearly the paper's contents.
5. Keep the reader/reviewer in mind. Make sure the manuscript is clean and well organized, free from errors and provides plenty of room for a reviewer to make comments in the margins. Use 12-point font, 1" margins and double-spacing throughout. This makes reviewing easier.
6. Organize as follows: Title Page, Main Text, References, Tables, Figures, Appendix. Avoid stand-alone sections providing a "literature review."
7. Aim for a combined total of no more than 10 tables and figures. Some journals require fewer. Do not intersperse tables and figures with the text unless expressly directed to do so. Place tables and figures at the end, following the reference section, each on its own page. This avoids formatting headaches and aids in review.
8. If you have a large amount of extraneous information, consider placing it in an appendix at the end of the paper. This appendix might include the equations of a large model, auxiliary regression results, robustness checks, test statistics, extra descriptive tables or figures, and/or a detailed description of a survey design, survey questionnaire or experimental design.
9. Page numbers should appear in the same font as the text and on every page.
10. The reference list should start on a new page, immediately following the main text, with the simple heading **References**. Do not number references unless required by the journal. List items alphabetically, by the last name of the first author. Use a consistent format similar to Lastname, Firstname. (year) "title" *Source*. Make sure your reference section is complete. List in the reference section everything you cite in the text. Make sure you cite in the text everything you list in the reference section. Use a consistent style that comes close to the style of the journal you are targeting. Avoid sloppiness and omissions.
11. Most research papers do not require a Table of Contents. Do not include one.
12. Some authors end the introduction with a paragraph that provides an outline or "roadmap" for the readers. These are usually unnecessary, especially for a paper organized along traditional lines.
13. If you use an acronym, spell it out the first time you use it.

14. Use footnotes *sparingly*. Footnotes should appear in the *same size and style font* as the text. Use double spacing. Number footnotes consecutively throughout the paper and place them at the bottom of pages unless the journal asks that you use endnotes. Footnote numbers follow punctuation marks, e.g. periods.
15. Left-justify and double-space all main text. Avoid adding extra blank lines or extra line spacing between paragraphs or sections. The first paragraph of a section (following a heading) should be flush left (not indented). Indent the first line of all subsequent paragraphs. Add one blank line (only) before a new section heading. Use the same font (size and style) for section headings as for the text. Simply render the section heading in bold, as in **Empirical Strategy**. Numbering section headings and sub-sections is optional in most cases. Consult the journal's style sheet.
16. Figures and tables should be numbered sequentially and include titles and, in most cases, an indication of the source of the material. Titles should be simple, for example "Table 1: Regression results for land shares." Titles *precede* tables but *follow* figures. Do not embed the title inside the table or figure. Make sure that all tables and figures are complete with legible labels, legends, axis titles, etc. All tables and figures **MUST** be referenced and/or described/discussed in the text. When referring to tables or figures in the text, use capital when referring to a specific item and lower case when referring to multiple items, for example: "See Table 1" but "Regression results are presented in tables 3-5)."
17. Visual appeal is extremely important. All figures should be clear and understandable, and should be understandable if printed only in black and white. This means using symbols or different types of lines, rather than different colors of lines. Some journals publish the online version of articles in color and the printed versions in black and white. Assume a future reader will only have access to a black and white version of the paper. Construct the figures with this in mind.
18. To avoid confusion reserve the term "significant" for occasions when you want to indicate that something is "statistically significant." In other cases using a word like "important" or "substantial" usually avoids problems.
19. Use present tense when referring to your paper, e.g. "Table 3 reports results from regressions ..." instead of "Table 3 will report results from regressions..." The same is usually true for the findings of others, e.g. "Shively (2010) finds..." instead of "Shively (2010) found..." The exception is when the reference you are citing is so old that it seems awkward to refer to it in the present tense (although it still sounds OK to write "Adam Smith argues...").
20. Et al. is an abbreviation for the Latin *et alia*, which means "and others." *Alia* is abbreviated, but *et* is not. Note the location of the period and don't be sloppy. If you use other Latin or foreign phrases, make sure you use them correctly and consistently.
21. When preparing your paper be very mindful of "borrowed language." Not all overlap is bad, but some kinds are problematic. It is sometimes difficult to find a way to re-word certain phrases, but, in general, if you are using exact words from a source, then you must place those words in quotation marks and you must clearly indicate the source (including the page number in the source material where the reader can find the exact words).
22. When developing the final draft of your paper consult the style sheet or "instructions for authors" for the journal you are targeting. Try to match the style and structure of your paper to that journal, but keep in mind that for an initial submission an exact match may not be essential.

Some websites with useful writing/research/editing tips and guidelines

Purdue Online Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

LEO (numerous writing resources and tips)

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/index.html>

Reviewing journal articles (David Pannell)

<http://dpannell.fnas.uwa.edu.au/reviews.htm>

Perspectives on publishing (David Pannell)

<http://dpannell.fnas.uwa.edu.au/prose.htm>

Referee guidelines (AE journal)

<http://www.iaae-agecon.org/journal/refguides.html>

CSWEP “Top Ten” list (professional advice)

<https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/cswep/programs/resources/readings/top-ten-lists>

AEA Resources for Economists on the Internet

<http://www.aeaweb.org/RFE/>

Kwon Choi “How to Publish in Top Journals”

<http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~jthuang/publish.pdf>

Kwon Choi “Being a Good Referee”

<http://www.roie.org/howr.pdf>

Keith Head “The Introduction Formula”

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/khead/research/research-advice/formula>

Marc Bellemare “The Conclusion Formula”

<http://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/12060>

Jay Shimshack “Conducting and Publishing Applied Economics Research

http://www.acem.sjtu.edu.cn/resume/20180213/TZ_GUEST/3192557333/Shimshack_SJT_Bio_and_Outline_2017.pdf

Tim Beatty and Jay Shimshack “Practical Tips for Writing and Publishing Applied Economics Papers”

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