

# Write ups (draft ver.)

POLS 602 (tamu)

Below I put together a note about common errors/issues I see in write ups. If you are not sure about how something should be formatted, think about how tables and texts are arranged in journals, especially in your area. If necessary, feel free to seek clarification from your TA or your instructor.

## 1 Presenting Results

- In tables and figures, provide captions and notes.
- Avoid relying on object names in R or the acronyms in the original dataset for variables names, as they tend to be incomprehensible. Instead, try to give names that are easier to understand. For binary variables, name your variable according to the label for value “1”. For example, if your “regime” variable only takes two values (“democracy” and “autocracy”), use one of them instead of “regime”.
- Don’t print out the raw output from R/Stata commands (summary, etc). Instead, format them using appropriate packages/functions (stargazer, xtable, etc).

## 2 Discussing Results

- After you present any table or figure, always begin by describing it. “Table 1 presents/reports ...”, “Figure 1 shows/illustrates ...” etc
- When discussing results, always mention uncertainty estimates. You can refer to the statistical significance or confidence intervals.
- Once you obtain a  $p$ -value, choose the appropriate level from the following.
  - Significance levels: (10%), 5%, 1%, 0.1%.
  - Confidence levels: (90%), 95%, 99%, 99.9%.

For example, when the  $p$ -value is 0.0005, you can say it is statistically significant at 0.1% (or 0.001) significance level. Alternatively, you can say “A is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).”

- Common phrases for null results: “we cannot reject the null”, “we fail to reject the null”, “it is not possible to reject the null.”

- Justify your conclusion/interpretation with relevant results. Sometimes I see an R output and a brief phrase “From the output above, we reject the null.” This is not good even when it is clear we should reject the null. Always refer to specific statistics
- If you need advice on writing, <http://fhollenbach.org/WritingAcademic/> may be a useful starting point.

### 3 Miscellaneous

- In general, equations need to be in display mode.
- Round numbers. “0.194” is preferred to “0.193548421”.
- Don’t show R commands, markdown messages, or interim results unless the problem set asks for them. Provide an R file with sufficient annotation so your TA can follow along if s/he needs to.
- On a related note, place all the discussion in the PDF.
- Avoid substituting values printed on R’s console in the place of objects. When `a <- 1/3`, use the R object “a” to take its square root. Do not substitute 0.333 instead.