

Ten Rules for Writing Up Quantitative Analyses

1. Data are plural, so “data” is plural. If you mean one data point, say *datum*. (Other people may disagree with this rule. They are wrong).
2. One regresses Y on X , not X on Y .
3. The things in the cells of your table are “coefficient estimates” or “estimated coefficients,” not “coefficients.” In frequentist statistics, the latter refer to the quantities we are trying to estimate from the data, while the former are those estimates themselves.
4. Your coefficient estimate may be 1.21560905136, but your readers need not know that. Learn what significant digits are, and routinely report estimates’ precision to no more than four.
5. Likewise, if you have variables that are on very different scales (say, per capita GDP and regime type), rescale them to be comparable before estimating your model and writing up the results.
6. A coefficient estimate can never be “significant in the wrong direction.” If you have an expectation vis-à-vis the sign of an estimate, then you’re doing one-tailed hypothesis testing.
7. p never “equals 0.000,” despite what your software might tell you. Say “ $p < 0.001$,” especially in tables.
8. Similarly, coefficient estimates are never “barely significant;” they are either significant, or not. If you are going to subscribe to the whole Neyman-Pearson apparatus for inference, you should be consistent about it.
9. You did not “estimate a maximum likelihood model.” Maximum likelihood (or least squares, or partial likelihood, or MCMC, or whatever) is a means of estimation and inference, not a model.
10. Logit/probit/Poisson/whatever coefficient estimates are not “meaningless,” or even “uninterpretable.”