

## Writing tips

Find in this document some writing tips. Please work through this document when you write your research proposals, chapters or any other document that you want me to read, and make sure that you provide a document to adhere to the writing tips below. I provide these in no particular order.

Before I provide a list of tips, note that when you submit documents to me to read, submit as pdf, and make sure that all hyperlinks are deactivated. It will also speed up my reading if you get someone to read your document for language & grammar before sending it to me.

The writing tips:

1. Write in short flowing sentences. Long sentences become difficult to follow. A sentence becomes too long if there are more than one comma or conjunctive in the sentence. One sentence should convey one fact.
2. Similarly, write shorter paragraphs. A paragraph is like a function in programming: The function should have one goal, one focus. However, avoid too short paragraphs. Both make reading difficult.
3. Make sure that each sentence or paragraph flows from the previous.
4. Equations should flow as part of a sentence.
5. Place figures, tables, algorithms after first reference to the figure, table, algorithm.
6. Do not use acronyms in headings.
7. Once you have defined an acronym, do not define it again. Simply use the defined acronym. However, in the conclusions, define again when first used.
8. The same applies to symbols.
9. Make sure that symbols are consistently used. One symbol, one meaning; one meaning, one symbol. Do not overload the meaning of symbols. To help you in this regard, create a table of symbols and their definitions.
10. Try to follow good conventions in the use of symbols.
11. Write in the third person.
12. Avoid the use of pronouns, such as it, its, this, them, they. These pronouns introduce ambiguities. Rather be very specific in what you refer to.
13. Do not use uncertain terms such as “some”, “certain”. These terms indicate that you are not sure yourself. Be very specific.
14. Do not use “etc”. Be complete and specific.
15. Avoid footnotes and clarifications in parentheses. These break reading flow.
16. Make sure that each concept is defined before it is used.
17. Do not make use of forward references.
18. Do not have main sections with detailed text followed by subsections. Each main section to start with the purpose of the main section and an outline of the remainder of the section. The main text is then organized in appropriate, flowing subsections.
19. A main section should not have only one subsection.
20. Write in present tense. Though, the empirical process and discussion of results in past tense.
21. Note the meaning of “it’s” is “it is”. Note the difference between the pronoun “its” and “it is”
22. Do not use contractions such as “don’t”, “we’re”.
23. Avoid using apostrophes to indicate positions, such as “the algorithm’s code..”
24. Note the difference between “to” and “too”
25. Also, note the difference between “amount” and “number of”. The latter refers to countable objects, the former to non-countable objects.
26. Be careful in the use of conjunctions, e.g. “Convergence is fast as many individuals are used” is not correct. Rather “Convergence is fast, because many individuals are used”.

27. Make sure that fonts in figures are the same as the main text.
28. Table and algorithm captions are usually provided at the top of the table, and that of figures, below the figure.
29. Convention is that single-digit numbers are given in words, and multi-digit numbers in numeric form.
30. Make sure that all mathematical symbols are given in math mode.
31. When citing a paper with more than two authors, then use FirstAuthor et al. For example: "Bosman et al showed that...." When there is only two authors, then use both authors, e.g. "Bosman and Engelbrecht showed that...". For one author, then "Bosman showed that..."
32. Note from the above the use of past tense.
33. Make sure that references are complete, and consistent. If you use first names in the bibliography, then you need to use the first names for all authors. Rather only use the initials of the authors, not their first names.
34. Note conventions with mathematical symbols: lower case symbols refer to scalar values, and when bold, to vectors. Upper case symbols refer to sets, and when bold, matrices.
35. Each figure, table, algorithm should be referred to in the text and discussed.
36. Each reference in the bibliography should be referred to.
37. Avoid "may be", "can be". These terms give the impression that you are not sure.
38. Do not start a sentence with a symbol.
39. Provide all latin words, such as "et al", in italics.
40. Avoid "-ing" words, e.g. "Optimising of the control parameters..."; rather, "Optimisation of the control parameters..."
41. You may use either American or British English, though use consistently.
42. Note: criterion is singular; criteria is plural.
43. Note: optima, minima, maxima are plural; optimum, minimum, maximum are singular