

Best Practices for Writing an Academic Paper Using Data

Prof. Dr. Stephan Huber

stephan.huber@petra.ac.id

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Alternative title

How to Write an Academic Paper Using Data Quick but Not Dirty

Disclaimer

This short course is bound to be incomplete, given my limited experiences and the subjectivity of my viewpoints. It is a report based on my personal experiences. Nevertheless, I hope you will find some of my suggestions and recommendations helpful. I firmly believe that implementing even a few of my recommendations can lead to increased success and a more efficient path towards publishing a paper, reducing stress and time wasted in the process.

First example how to improve your writings

BO

Check language: This short course is going to be incomplete, based on my limited experiences, and the result of my subjective points of view. It is an report of my own experience. However, I hope you find some of my hints and recommendations helpful. I believe, following only some of my recommendations can make you be more successful and achieve the goal of publishing a paper faster and with less stress caused and less time wasted.



Your language is mostly clear, but there are a few minor grammar and wording improvements that can make it more polished. Here's a revised version:

"This short course is bound to be incomplete, given my limited experiences and the subjectivity of my viewpoints. It is a report based on my personal experiences. Nevertheless, I hope you will find some of my suggestions and recommendations helpful. I firmly believe that implementing even a few of my recommendations can lead to increased success and a more efficient path towards publishing a paper, reducing stress and time wasted in the process."

Who are you?

Please introduce yourself.

Doing research you should

1. Have research question that can be answered
2. Know your expertise and collaborate accordingly
3. Know your data
4. Know your empirical methods
5. Know your tools
6. Know the literature
7. Know how to write
8. Know your readers and referees
9. Look out for criticism
10. Finish even if not perfect

Suggested outline

1. Fundamentals of quantitative methods how to do research with data
 - 1.1 Doing research
 - 1.2 Features of good empirical research
 - 1.3 Causes of effects vs. effects of causes
2. Identification
 - 2.1 How to get data
 - 2.2 The fundamental problem of causal inference
 - 2.3 How to read fast by knowing the type of empirical research

3. Tools

- 3.1 How to manage information
- 3.2 Statistical software packages (Stata, R)
- 3.3 Writing tools (LaTeX, RMarkdown)
- 3.4 Bibliographical tools (Jabref)
- 3.5 Language tools (grammarly, deepl, ChatGPT, capitalizemytitle)
- 3.6 Collaboration tools (Dropbox, git, github)

4. How to produce words and collaborate

- 4.1 Organize collaborations
- 4.2 Publication strategy
- 4.3 International conferences
- 4.4 Presenting and discussing your work
- 4.5 How to write

Links

- ▶ [Homepage](#)
- ▶ [Quantitative Methods: Lecture Notes](#)
- ▶ [Stata Lecture Notes](#)
- ▶ [Github Account](#)
- ▶ [Cochrane's Writing Tips](#)

Organize collaborations

- ▶ Contact potential co-authors as early as possible and make clear why you see a fruitful collaboration.
- ▶ Discuss your plans and if both agree on a collaboration try to clarify the roles of all persons.
- ▶ Also discuss things openly how many working hours everybody can invest – now and in later years.
 - ▶ It can take years to finally publish a paper!
- ▶ How should author names be ordered (alphabetically?)
- ▶ Be aware of supervisors, seniors, deans, and others with power, data or money! They sometimes want to be on the paper without a significant contribution!
- ▶ In a Phd-program: Discuss and clarify the role of your supervisor and the board of supervisors!

Conferences

- ▶ Go on conferences as early as possible and as often as possible.
- ▶ That is the place where you get inspired and where you can find and refine research ideas.
- ▶ Go as international as possible!
- ▶ Mix large and general conferences with very specialized and smaller conferences.
- ▶ Try to organize a Seminar in your place (blocked or weekly) and invite researchers that are available and interesting!
- ▶ Be active in conferences: ask questions during a talk or after.
- ▶ Adapt cultural habits. For example, in Europe it is common that we...
- ▶ Try to encrypt the messages on conferences....

Be available and engage with colleagues

- ▶ Homepage (CV, papers, etc.)
- ▶ Always help others. You learn a lot, too.
- ▶ Usually, it is not a good strategy to hide your research strategy/results due to the fear to get plagiarized.

Where to publish

- ▶ Be aware of predatory journals and editors!
- ▶ One large or multiple smaller articles?
- ▶ Journal?
 - ▶ General interest vs. field journal
 - ▶ Special issue
 - ▶ Where to start and where to end
 - ▶ Valid strategy: Start (too) high, get rejected with feedback and then try it in a more realistic journal

Where to publish (cont.)

- ▶ Working/Discussion paper series (SSRN, Github, Homepage, Researchgate, ...)?
- ▶ Letter?
 - ▶ If you see an opportunity to write one, go for it. Writing it may go quick and the referee process is usually incredibly short. It can be a nice first positive experience. At least, you learned how to write concise.
 - ▶ To write a letter is a good exercise.
- ▶ Book?

Submission

- ▶ Once you have a journal, study the submission requirements!
- ▶ Really: study them and follow them 100% percent.
- ▶ Editors are busy and they have enough submissions. If your layout sucks, why should they think your content will be any better.
- ▶ Often journals offer LaTeX templates. Use it!
- ▶ Use the citation style of the journal.
- ▶ Do the language editing before you submit. Avoid typos and grammar issues.
- ▶ Write a concise letter to the editor wherein you explain why you think your paper fits into his journal and why you think it will appeal his readers. Make your contribution clear.
- ▶ Make the abstract as perfect as possible! Often editors only read the abstract to make a first and unfortunately final negative decision.

How to deal with referee reports

- ▶ If you get rejected: take the reports serious and alter your expectations and target your journal accordingly.
- ▶ Discuss the referee report with colleagues, co-authors, and maybe a senior.
- ▶ Don't be frustrated by referee report.
- ▶ If the referee is unhappy, it is your fault! Always!
- ▶ However, it is not always the case that the referee is right. Sometimes you just failed to explain and motivate things properly.

How to deal with referee reports (cont.)

- ▶ To find out whether you should change your research or phrase it differently is difficult to decide. In doubt, consult your supervisor or a person who is objective and knows your work.
- ▶ Please consider, referees are busy and often don't read the paper in such great detail than you may think. If their first impression is bad, they will just try to find a reason to reject it.
- ▶ Please understand that it is not the job of referees to improve your paper. They are no co-authors. Especially, if they reject the paper with no revision.
- ▶ Thus, don't expect that they show respect or appreciate the parts in the paper that are interesting and of good quality. That is not their job! Thus, if the report is 100% negative, it does not necessarily mean your paper sucks!

How to write

- ▶ Write concise, clear, and motivate the reader! See Cochrane (2005) and Barros (2016).
- ▶ Tell a story, don't sell a story.
- ▶ With *MOTIVATION* I mean the reader should know what you are doing and why.
- ▶ Structure your paper: the reader should know where you are doing what.
- ▶ Say what you are NOT doing.
- ▶ Discuss the weaknesses of your research and how you deal(t) with them.
- ▶ Hide nothing that is relevant, even if it is opposing your arguments.

How to write (cont.)

- ▶ Try to understand the conventions in your field and in the targeted journal and employ them in your work whether you like them or not.
- ▶ Try to learn from the best and from good papers in the respective field and journal.
- ▶ Sometimes it is better not to learn from the best papers as they may not have to deal with some problems like you must deal. For example, the best papers are usually built on a rock solid empirical strategy and outstanding data quality. If your data quality is problematic, however, how cannot see how to discuss such issues by looking on the superstar papers.

Literature

Barros, L. O. (2016). *The only academic phrasebook you'll ever need: 600 examples of academic language*. Smashwords.com.

Cochrane, J. (2005). *Writing tips for PhD students*. Accessed January 30, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.johnhcochrane.com/s/phd/_paper/_writing.pdf