



# Center for Writing and Speaking

## F NO. 10 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

### Writing in Economics

*As in all disciplines, writing an economics paper is a skill that takes lots of practice. You should strive for clarity in economics papers: most ideas in economics are actually quite simple! Do some basic reading and research in order to narrow your topic to a question that can be asked in one or two sentences and can be answered within your page limit.*

#### General tips

- It is acceptable to use “I” in economics papers, but “we” is usually acceptable for group papers.
- Visit the CWS for help. Don’t wait until the night before your paper is due!
- Start writing early in the process of doing a research paper. You’ll probably end up substantially revising your words, but writing early in the research process can help clarify ideas, improve flow, and generate additional areas for research.
- Draft an outline first before you start writing. New ideas always come up while you are writing, but with a fundamental outline, you will be less confused about where to add the new arguments or examples.
- Save often and make backup copies.
- Use titles, labels, and notes to make tables and graphs self-explanatory. Anyone should be able to understand the gist of your tables and graphs without having to read your paper. Do not include tables or graphs that are not referenced in the paper. Look at a few published articles to get ideas on how to present tables and graphs.

#### References

- If you used any sources, include a references section that provides the citation information for all works cited for your paper. Note that this is not a bibliography that lists all the materials you read or consulted; it only lists the materials you cite in your paper.
- Most economics papers use in-text citation (parenthetical citation) instead of footnotes or endnotes. Footnotes are only for material that is somewhat tangential to the main text and should be used sparingly.
- Works that are paraphrased can either be included directly in the sentence:  
“Keynes (1922) argued that animal spirits. . .”  
or cited at the end of a sentence:  
“Animal spirits affect the business cycle (Keynes 1922).”
- For direct quotations, include the page number in the in-text citation.
- If a work has two authors, the authors are both listed upon each mention. Three authors are listed in full on first mention (and in the references section) and as “et al.” thereafter. Four or more are always listed as “et al.”
- Unless otherwise specified, use MLA format. Make sure you do this according to the most recent conventions of MLA formatting—check the latest edition of the *St. Martin’s Handbook* for help!

AGNES SCOTT