

EC371 Economic Analysis of Asset Prices

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Hints for Term Paper preparation

Topics

- Preparation
- Organising the layout
- Writing
- Presentation
- Citations and References

For further guidance see:

Strunk, W. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Longman 1999 – a little book, full of invaluable advice

EC371 Term Paper Hints, slide 0

Preparation

- Check the question (term paper title)
 - What are the “sub-questions”?
 - Pose questions that you choose to address in your paper
 - Make them explicit, i.e., tell the reader what they are
 - This will give your paper focus (gain the reader’s attention)
- Examples: look at the EESJ online – aim high!
- Check the Undergraduate Economics Handbook on:
 - A Guide to Good Practice in Assessed Work
 - Making the Best of Your Essays, Term Papers and Projects
- Pay special attention to the sections on:
 - Avoiding academic offences (plagiarism) – **VERY** important
 - Referencing (i.e., referring to the work of others)
- **IMPORTANT:** Always keep at least one back-up copy of your drafts, **always**

EC371 Term Paper Hints, slide 1

Organising the layout

- All term papers should have an introduction and a conclusion that ‘sandwich’ the ‘meat’, i.e., substantive material.
- Your ‘Introduction’
 - Will tell the reader what your paper is about
 - Tell the reader the questions you will address: make them *explicit*
 - Keep to the point, avoid waffling around the topic
 - Briefly explain the layout of the remainder of the paper
 - *Write the introduction last*, when you know what follows
- Your ‘Conclusion’: summarises the paper, gathering together your overall arguments
- Sections: divide the paper *explicitly* into sections
 - Each section should have a title (to say what it’s about)
 - *Divide sections into sub-sections* if they help to clarify the exposition (sections are essential, sub-sections encouraged)

EC371 Term Paper Hints, slide 2

Writing

- Try to keep the reader in mind, *always*
 - While the reader may know the subject, your paper shows what **you** have learned about the subject
 - Hence: *be explicit*. Make sure that the reader has no doubt about your argument (analysis, etc). Never leave it implicit, thinking “he’ll be able to figure out what I’m getting at”.
- Try to be clear, concise and to the point
 - Avoid waffle. Re-read what you have written, and
 - “Omit needless words. Vigorous writing is concise.” (Strunk and White, 1999, p.23)
 - If you express an opinion, make sure it is supported with a reasoned argument. *Bad practice*: “I think that ...”
 - Careless, sloppy writing always detracts from the mark you are awarded. Check your spelling.
 - Cultivate a professional style, as found in, e.g., *Journal of Economic Perspectives*

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Presentation

- Some fairly simple (obvious) :
 - Allow ample margins around the text (at least one inch, 2.5cm, top, bottom and sides.
 - Use a 12 point font
 - Double-line spacing (i.e., vertical double-spacing) should always be used. *This is a very strong recommendation.*
- Footnotes: include these if you wish, but sparingly
- Quotations from the works of others
 - **Must always** be enclosed in inverted commas, “ and ”
 - Beware of long quotes (they reflect bad style)
 - Always ask yourself “why am I including this quote?”
 1. Because you agree with it. (To support your argument)
 2. Because you disagree with it. (You will then dispute it.)
 3. Because it’s easier that way. (A very **bad** reason.)

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Citations and References

- Citations: these appear in the text of your essay to refer to specific items (books, articles, websites, or whatever).
 - Concise format, e.g. Shiller (2005)
 - Each quote should be accompanied by a citation with page number, e.g. Shiller (2005), p.63, or (Shiller, 2005, p.63)
 - Bad practice (but alas too common): including citations without being explicit about *why* the citation appears there. *Don’t do this!*
 - Use a form of words that makes clear the role of the citation
- Bibliography (list of references, detailing each item)
 - Each citation must point unambiguously to a reference
 - For *every* reference there must be at least one citation
 - *Never* include any item in the bibliography for which there is no citation.

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