

Department of Economics
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Style and Formatting Guidelines for the Economics Honors Thesis

1. An original research paper should be no more than ten pages long, with reasonable spacing between lines (1.5 works fine) and with a reasonably large font size (11 point works fine). The ten page limit does not include your title page, which should also contain your abstract. Nor does it include your references. Nor does it include supporting figures or tables. Nor does it include appendices with details of calculations or derivations. But don't abuse this last loophole: your main argument must be contained within the ten pages.

A literature review may be longer. If you are writing a literature review rather than an original research paper, consult with your supervisor as to the appropriate length.

2. The abstract should be short, less than 100 words, and contain a statement of the paper's main contribution.
3. The introduction should both motivate the paper and provide an overview of its main results. Economics papers are not mystery stories: you *should* give almost everything away in the introduction. The body of the paper will be devoted to fleshing out the details of your argument.
4. Keep your motivation to the point.

For original research papers, don't turn the motivating discussion into a review essay on some very general topic. You can, and should, briefly mention that there are larger issues at stake, and that your work contributes to the understanding of these larger issues. But the discussion of motivation should not misrepresent the paper's actual focus, which is probably quite narrow.

5. Don't exaggerate. In an original research paper, don't overstate your contribution to the literature. Don't make strong policy claims based on research that is tentative and preliminary.
6. In an original research paper, the literature review should be short and to the point. Your objective is to explain how your work relates to other work in the area. A useful approach is to position your paper as answering questions that the existing literature had left open.

Avoid making broad editorial statements, either positive or negative, about other papers (e.g. paper x is brilliant, paper y is incompetent). In an original

research paper, you should point out defects in the existing literature *if* those defects are germane to your research. If your thesis is a literature review, rather than original research, your scope for critiquing the literature is broader. But your critique should be focused and constructive.

7. It is customary to have a concluding section but, especially for original research papers, that have a 10 page limit, you can omit it. A conclusion should summarize the paper's findings, and can suggest directions for future research and speculate on possible policy implications.
8. Use footnotes, not endnotes.
9. Include a separate references section at the end of the paper. Every work cited in the text must appear in the references; every work listed in the references must be cited in the text. The references should be in alphabetical order. There are a number of different acceptable styles for citations and references. The only real requirement is that you include enough information. Aumann (1976) is an example of a cite of a journal article. Foster and Young (2000) is an example of a cite of an unpublished paper. Tirole (1988) is an example of a cite of a book. Brown (1951) is an example of a cite of a paper that appears as a chapter in an edited volume.
10. Finally, the classic style handbook is Strunk and White (1999).

References

- AUMANN, R. (1976): "Agreeing to Disagree," *Annals of Statistics*, 4, 1236–1239.
- BROWN, G. W. (1951): "Iterative Solutions of Games By Fictitious Play," in *Activity Analysis of Production and Allocation*, ed. by T. J. Koopmans, pp. 374–376. John Wiley, New York.
- FOSTER, D., AND P. YOUNG (2000): "Learning To Play Nash," Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
- STRUNK, W., AND E. B. WHITE (1999): *The Elements of Style*. Macmillan, New York, 4 edn.
- TIROLE, J. (1988): *Theory of Industrial Organization*. MIT, Cambridge, MA.