

Guidelines for writing a thesis or seminar paper

Kiel University
Chair of International Monetary Economics and International Finance

1 Scope

Maximum number of pages (including figures and tables):

- Seminar paper: 15 pages
- Bachelor thesis: 30 pages
- Master thesis: 40 pages

What to hand in:

- Always: One digital copy (PDF, via Email or on a CD/DVD)
- Always: All data and clearly documented executable scripts that allow us to replicate your results (your own work)
- Always: All your non-static internet sources (PDF, via Email or on a CD/DVD)
- Seminar paper: Two printed copies (in a folder) to our office
- Bachelor or Master thesis: Two bound copies (adhesive binding) to the examination office. All digital files mentioned above must be on a CD or DVD that is enclosed with one of the printed copies of the thesis

2 Formal guidelines

The paper must include (in the listed order):

- Title page: name of the university and faculty, title, semester, student id, supervisor, field of study, your name, your address and e-mail address
- Table of contents
- List of tables, list of figures, table of abbreviations, table of symbols (if necessary)
- Main text
- References
- Appendices (if necessary)
- A signed and dated Declaration of Authorship

- size and formatting: DIN A4, with reasonable margins, font size 12pt for the main text, line spacing: 1.5
Footnotes, formulas, tables, figures should be numbered continuously and integrated into the text.
- Check also the webpage of the examination office for formal requirements!

3 Literature

- Clearly mark every line of thought that is not your own as a citation by either using footnotes, e.g., Cf. Gneezy et al. (2003), p. 822, or using in-text citations, e.g., ... (Rouwenhorst, 1998, pp. 277-279). You can use any appropriate citation style you like, but it has to be consistent and the information provided has to be complete. The same applies to the references section (see below).
- Use your own words when you describe others lines of thought! It is not enough to exchange single words or change the order of the original sentence. It is also not enough to simply translate a source from a foreign language (for example English to German).
- Cite primary literature wherever possible. Choose references by quality and fit and not by ease of access. Do not cite working papers if the work has been published.
- Most webpages do not qualify as a scientific source.
- Google is not the prime tool for literature research, any good library's database is.
- Direct (literal) quotes must start and end in quotation marks and should be used scarcely!
- All cited references must appear in the references section at the end of the paper, here some suggestions:
for journal articles: Bernheim, B. D., Shleifer, A., and Summers, L. H. (1985). The Strategic Bequest Motive, *Journal of Political Economy*, 93(6), 1045-1076.
for working papers: Daniel, K., and Moskowitz, T. (2013). Momentum Crashes, Working Paper.
for books: Friedman, M. (1957). A Theory of the Consumption Function. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
for articles in collections: DeBondt, W. F. M., and Thaler, R. H. (1995). Financial decision-making in markets and firms: A behavioral perspective, in Jarrow, R. A., Maksimovic, V., and Ziemba, W. T. (eds.): *Handbooks in Operations Research and Management Science*, Vol. 9, 385-410. North Holland, Amsterdam.
for online-documents: Socio-economic Panel (2007). Household Question Form, URL: [http:...](http://...) (last accessed 18.12.2013).

If we detect plagiarism (and we actively look for it) you will fail!

4 Content

- The golden thread (line of thought, roter Faden) is the key to a good paper! Make sure the reader always understands what you are writing and why you are writing it.
- Every sentence counts! The purpose of each sentence should be comprehensible. Only write things that help answer your research question. Do not digress. Be concise.
- Every claim needs justification! Do not claim things or assume they are self-evident. Justify and, if possible, cite sources that support your claim. If available, also cite contrasting opinions and reason why you side with what position.
- A critical discussion of the literature is essential! Do not just recite un-commented positions from the literature.
- Avoid long and complicated sentences and use simple, understandable language.
- Include figures and tables in the main text. Only put them in the appendix if they are supplementary. Long mathematical derivations also go in the appendix.
- Add a caption to each table and figure which explains all variables and acronyms appearing in the table/figure. It should be possible to understand tables and figures without going back to the main text.

5 General advice

- Talk to your supervisor about your agenda. For your thesis: visit the office hour a few times, prepare by summarizing your progress and questions. Remember: We cannot write your thesis and we can only answer questions which you can clearly formulate.
- Read a book about scientific writing if you are unsure about style and structure.
- Have a look at a good review journal to learn how articles can be summarized and discussed.
- Give some thought on technical details before starting, formatting a long document is more difficult than you think: which software do you use and where can you access it? Also: make a backup of your files.
- When you have been given specific references for your topic: its discussion has to be an essential part of your paper. When you leave it out without consulting with your supervisor you are probably off topic.
- Plan your thesis. Schedule for proofreading, revision and print.