

How to read papers

1. Which papers should you read?
2. Why do you read a paper?
 - a. With own idea in mind?
 - i. How does this paper relate to my idea?
 - b. Without a specific idea in mind?
 - i. What question does the paper set out to answer? Is this an important question? Why?
 - ii. What are the weaknesses of the existing literature on this question?
 - iii. What does the paper contribute to the existing literature?
 - iv. What is the paper's line of argument?
 1. Empirical: What type of data is used? What is the identification strategy? Is it a good one? What strengths and weaknesses does the identification strategy have? What estimation methods are used? Is there anything else that might have been done; any information you would like to see? Is the data good enough to support the weight of the analysis? What data might be better?
 2. Theoretical: What type of model is used? Is this a good choice? Could a different model be applied? What assumptions are needed? What simplifications are used? Are they realistic/justified? What are the predictions? Can/Are assumptions or predictions (be) tested? How robust are the results w.r.t. changes in the assumptions?
 - v. Does the paper answer the question in i.?
 - vi. Does the paper answer other questions? If so, what are they?
 - vii. What did you learn from the paper that you did not know already?

How to write papers

3. Weapon of choice: Word vs Latex
 - a. WYSIWYG: Word/Pages/Scientific Workplace
 - b. WYSIWYM: Latex with Text Editor
4. Think before you write and avoid fanciness
 - a. Before you start writing, line out your structure.
 - i. Introduction – Body – Conclusion
 1. Introduction: State your question, motivate your question (who should I care?), line out your paper and answer your question (briefly).
 2. Body: Show the reader how you arrived at your answer and try to convince them of your conclusions.
 3. Conclusion: Repeat what you set out to do, summarize and discuss your findings and give an outlook on future research prospects.
 - ii. Title page: title, author(s) and affiliations, contact for the corresponding author, abstract (150 words or less), Keywords (10 or less), JEL classification and (never forget) the acknowledgements.
 - b. Stick to standard styles
 - c. Make notes and mark them as notes
5. Style?!?
 - a. Present tense! Use Paragraphs. Be specific.
 - b. When to quote and when not to quote.
 - c. Citations and bibliography
 - i. What you cite has to be in the bibliography, what is in the bibliography needs to be cited.
 - ii. Encyclopedias and related books can be cited without bibliographical reference
 - iii. Style is not crucial, as long as you are consistent (chances are you will have to adapt to some style guidelines later on anyway)
 - d. When do you cite? Whenever you quote, paraphrase or summarize someone else's work, when you mention numbers or statistics, when you make a claim that you do not show/prove to hold based on your argument or data, etc. You do not cite if you state generally recognized information.
 - e. Who is your reader? Paper must be understandable for interested non-specialists.
 - f. Tables and graphs must be self-explanatory but also discussed in the body of the paper.
 - g. Books: Strunk & White "The Elements of Style", AE reference style handbook: The Chicago Manual of Style