

How to Produce a Written Document

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Note: NEW material is highlighted.

Abstract

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A brief guide on how to prepare written documents (papers, reports, etc.) All papers (at least those written for me :-)) should satisfy at least the following guidelines:

- Have an informative title.
- Provide an abstract.
- All direct quotes should:
 - enclosed in quote marks (“/”)
 - be accompanied by a full citation
- Be double-spaced.
- Be on single-sided paper.
- Have numbered pages.

Contents

1. General Information
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1 General Information

1.1

For general information on how to decide what to write and how to do the actual writing, see my Web page, “How to Study”, at [<http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/howtostudy.html>].

1.2

All papers **MUST** be word-processed (or typed), using a standard 10-, 11-, or 12-point roman font if possible. If you have a choice, the best font to use is “Times Roman”.

1.2.1

This document, for example, was produced by L^AT_EX 2_ε, using 12-point type, in the “times” font.

1.3

Re-read your paper carefully, to catch garbled sentences, misspellings, etc. (On Unix, I strongly suggest that you learn to use the `vi` or `emacs` text-editors, the L^AT_EX 2_ε word-processor, and the `ispell` spelling checker.)

1.4

Use $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$ laser or inkjet print-out (or type on *bond* paper; if typing, do *not* use onionskin or corrasable paper). The paper does *not* have to be laser- or inkjet-printed; dot-matrix printing, however, should be dark enough to be legible. *Oversized computer printouts (the kind with guide-holes) should be trimmed, if necessary, to $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$.*

1.5

Do not use double-sided printing; i.e., your paper should be on one side of the page only. And please do not try to conserve paper by using the blank side of previously-used paper. That’s fine for drafts, but not for the final product to be handed in.

1.6

Number all pages. If necessary, do this by hand.

1.7

Do not use running heads or foots (feet?).

1.8

Errors can best be corrected electronically (for word-processed papers) or by using correction tape or correction fluid.

1.9

Double space everything you type. (In L^AT_EX 2_ε, this can be done by putting the following in the preamble: `\renewcommand{\baselinestretch}{2}`.)

1.10

Use a 1" (no more, no less) margin on all 4 sides of the page. (In L^AT_EX 2_ε, this can be done by using the `fullpage` package.)

1.11

Indent new paragraphs 5 spaces from the left margin (or use `\parindent 0.5in` in L^AT_EX 2_ε).

1.12

Begin the *first* page of your paper using the following format:

TITLE OF PAPER
Your Name
Date
Number and title of course

Then skip 3 spaces and start your paper *on the same page*.

1.13

You should *not* use a cover page (including printout cover pages), blank pages in the beginning, middle, or at the end, or expensive folders or binders.

1.14

The title of your paper should be descriptive (not: “Term Paper”). If you want to use a “cute” title (e.g., “Trials and Tribulations”), be sure to have a subtitle that *is* descriptive, separated from the cute title by a colon (e.g., “Trials and Tribulations: A Complexity Analysis of Three Sorting Algorithms”).

1.15

Every paper should have a 1-paragraph **ABSTRACT** that very briefly and telegraphically outlines the paper. It is also *very* helpful to have an introductory paragraph that does the same thing, but less telegraphically. The abstract should appear immediately after the title information (i.e., after the 3 spaces; see item 1.12, above) and before the paper itself begins. For useful information on how to write an abstract, check out some of the websites on this topic; for the latest list, do a google.com search on “how to write an abstract”.

1.16

Do *not* use a table of contents.

1.17

PROOFREAD YOUR PAPER and **CHECK FOR SPELLING ERRORS!!!!** (On Unix, use the `ispell` program.)

1.18

If your paper is more than 1 page long, put *one* staple in the upper *left* corner. (If you don't have staples or friends with staplers, or if your paper is too large to staple, then use a paper clip or binder clip; do *not* fold down the corner or use tape.) Oversized computer printouts should be trimmed, burst, and stapled.

1.19 Other hints:

1.19.1

Separate sentences with precisely 2 blank spaces. (\LaTeX 2 ϵ will do it automatically, but will also add those extra spaces after *any* period (or question mark, or exclamation mark), whether you want it to or not, unless you tell it not to; see the \LaTeX 2 ϵ manual for details.)

1.19.2

Footnote numbers should always *follow* punctuation.¹

¹Like this one did. But keep footnotes to an absolute minimum. Important information, such as the information in this footnote, should really appear in the text, *not* in a footnote!

1.20

Some good books to consult:

1. Gillman, Leonard (1987), *Writing Mathematics Well: A Manual for Authors* (Washington, DC: Mathematical Association of America).
2. Knuth, Donald E.; Larrabee, Tracy; & Roberts, Paul M. (1989), *Mathematical Writing* (Washington, DC: Mathematical Association of America).

2 Special Information for Programming Projects

All programming projects should be written as *reports*. Each project report must be *typed, double-spaced*, on $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ " paper, with any oversized computer printouts burst and trimmed to that size, *stapled* in the upper left corner. (Please do *not* use folders or covers, unless your report is too thick to be stapled.)

Each report must consist of the following components:

1. descriptive title (not: "Project 1")
2. your name, the course number, and date completed
3. abstract of project (a 1-paragraph summary)
4. description of the project, in the form of a term paper
5. list of references (if appropriate) (see "How to Handle Citations", §3)
6. an *appendix*, consisting of:
 - *annotated* sample runs, *followed* by
 - *well-documented and commented* code (e.g., *self-documenting* code)

3 How to Handle Citations

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3.1 DON'T PLAGIARIZE! EVEN ACCIDENTALLY!!

If you use someone else's words, enclose them in quotation marks (“/”), and give a full citation.

3.2

In the body of the paper, please refer to bibliographic items using the format:

Last_name year

E.g., Rapaport 1986. (Parentheses in various places are optional; see 3.3 for examples.)

3.3 References for quotations must include page numbers!

Use this format:

(Last_name year: pages)

E.g., “Clearly, a system capable of reasoning about an agent's beliefs must be able to handle quasi-indicators if it is not to draw faulty conclusions” (Rapaport 1986: 379). Long quotations should be displayed, without quotation marks:

Clearly, a system capable of reasoning about an agent's beliefs must be able to handle quasi-indicators if it is not to draw faulty conclusions. Moreover, theories that do not take quasi-indexical reference into account do so at the expense of being unable to represent an important category of beliefs, namely, beliefs about oneself. And a number of philosophers, from John Perry (1979) to, most recently, Myles Brand (1984), have emphasized the importance of such beliefs for explaining and producing actions. (Rapaport 1986: 379.)

3.4

There should be a **REFERENCES** section at the end of the paper. It should list *all and only* those works explicitly cited in the paper. The list should be in alphabetical order by first author's last name. Although I prefer the following formats, the exact format is not as important as having all the following information:

3.4.1 For an article:

Last_name, First_name (year), “Title”, *Journal* vol: pages.

E.g.,

Rapaport, William J. (1986), “Logical Foundations for Belief Representation”, *Cognitive Science* 10: 371–422.

3.4.2 For a book:

Last_name, First_name (year), *Title* (city: publisher).

E.g.,

Schagrin, Morton L.; Rapaport, William J.; & Dipert, Randall D. (1985), *Logic: A Computer Approach* (New York: McGraw–Hill).

3.4.3 For an article in a book:

Last_name, First_name (year), “Title”, in Editor_name (ed.), *Title* (city: publisher): pages.

E.g.,

Shapiro, Stuart C., & Rapaport, William J. (1987), “SNePS Considered as a Fully Intensional Propositional Semantic Network”, in N. Cercone & G. McCalla (eds.), *The Knowledge Frontier: Essays in the Representation of Knowledge* (New York: Springer–Verlag): 262–315.

3.4.4 For a Web page:

Web_Page_Author’s_Last_Name, First_name (date of webpage if given, else date retrieved), “Title” <URL>.

- However, you should only use Websites sparingly, preferably only when there is no better published source.

3.4.5

For further information, see a good style manual, such as:

1. Turabian, Kate L. (1987), *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 5th edition, revised and expanded by B. B. Honigsblum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
2. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

4 Some Rules of Thumb about Grammatical Issues

4.1 Commas:

4.1.1

Use commas to separate clauses linked by ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘but’, etc. E.g., “This is the first clause, and this is the second clause.”

4.1.2

Almost never use a comma after ‘and’.

4.1.3

In general (despite the fact that the very next comma you will see here is an exception!), commas come in pairs (like parentheses). E.g., “Commas, which sometimes are used like parentheses, usually come in pairs.”

4.1.4

Use a single comma after an introductory phrase (such as ‘however’, ‘therefore’, ‘in general’, ‘in this case’, etc.) See the previous rule for an example.

4.1.5

Never use a comma before the main verb of a sentence. E.g., “This sentence, should not have a comma where it does.”

4.1.6

Always use a comma before the final element of a series, e.g., “one, two, three, four, and five”.

4.1.7

When in doubt, leave them out!

4.2 Semi-colons:

4.2.1

Use them to separate clauses that are *not* linked by ‘and’. E.g., “This is the first clause; this is the second clause.”

4.2.2

Semi-colons and commas should be used together when two clauses are conjoined, the second of which begins with an introductory phrase such as ‘therefore’, ‘because’, etc.: “Clark Kent is Superman; therefore, Kryptonite can hurt him.”

4.2.3

Use semicolons to separate items in a list if one of the items contains a comma (or is itself a comma-separated list). E.g.: one; two, three, or four; five; and six. E.g.: Smith 1981; Jones 1989, 1990; and McGillicuddy 1991.

4.3 Colons:

4.3.1

Use them to signal a comment on the preceding sentence, or to introduce an idea. If what follows the colon is a full sentence, capitalize its initial letter. But if what follows the colon is not a full sentence, then don't capitalize the initial letter. E.g., "This sentence uses a colon: It introduces this new idea." E.g., "This sentence also uses a colon: a silly example."

4.4 'Which' vs. 'that':

4.4.1

A *restrictive relative clause* is a clause that “restricts” the noun phrase that it modifies. It is not eliminable. E.g., “The restrictive clause *that is italicized in this sentence* cannot be eliminated without changing the meaning of the sentence.”

4.4.2

A *non-restrictive clause* is a clause that does *not* “restrict” the noun phrase that it modifies. It is like a parenthetical expression that can be eliminated. E.g., “The non-restrictive relative clause, *which is italicized in this sentence*, gives you extra information that is a bit like an aside.”

4.4.3

Now for the point of all this: Use ‘that’ to introduce a restrictive clause, and use ‘which’ to introduce a non-restrictive clause.

- Sometimes, you can use ‘which’ to introduce a restrictive clause, though you shouldn’t.
- You should never use ‘that’ to introduce a non-restrictive clause.

4.4.4

Moreover, always precede the ‘which’ (that introduces a non-restrictive clause) by a comma, and never precede the ‘that’ by a comma.

4.5 ‘As’ vs. ‘since’:

4.5.1

Don’t use ‘as’ to mean ‘since’.

4.5.2

“Q: Does it matter, grammatically, whether I say ‘BECAUSE, SINCE or AS Sidney was leaving, his wife felt uneasy’?”

“A: Not grammatically because SINCE and AS are equated with BECAUSE. But AS is a poor choice, since AS also has a temporal sense. With AS, the example may mean either WHILE SIDNEY WAS LEAVING or BECAUSE SIDNEY WAS LEAVING. For the sake of clarity, use BECAUSE, SINCE, or WHILE.” (Morton S. Freeman, “Word Watcher”, *Buffalo News* (1999).

4.5.3

Here are some potentially ambiguous uses of ‘as’:

- “Exceptions might arise **as** changes to the rules are made.”

Does it mean:

1. exceptions might arise while changes are made?
2. exceptions might arise because changes are made?

- “This set of sentences serves as the program’s ‘brain’ **as** the the program deduces information.”

Does it mean:

1. the set serves while the program deduces?
2. the set serves because the program deduces?

4.6 Capital letters:

4.6.1 Use them for:

- the first letter of a sentence
- proper names (of people, places, corporations, etc.)

4.6.2 Don't use them for:

- the phrases 'computer science', 'artificial intelligence'
- conjunctions or prepositions in titles of articles or books
 - In such titles, when in doubt about what to capitalize, *either*: only capitalize the first word, *or*: capitalize the word that you're not sure about.

4.7 Apostrophes:

4.7.1

Don't use them to form the plural, unless you are forming the plural of an abbreviation that might be misinterpreted otherwise. E.g., the plural of 'apostrophe' is: apostrophes. E.g., the plural of OK (which, by the way is correctly spelled 'OK' or 'O.K.', but not 'okay') is: OKs. However, the plural of 'A' is: A's (otherwise, it might look like the word 'as' with a capital letter).

4.7.2

Use them to indicate that one or more letters have been omitted from a word: don't (= do not), five 'n' ten (= five and ten).

4.7.3

Use them to form the possessive: Bill's book. But this rule does not hold for possessive pronouns, none of which take apostrophes: his, hers, yours, ours, theirs, its

4.7.4 it's vs. its:

- it's = it is
- its = the possessive of: it

4.8 Some other word confusions:

4.8.1 your vs. you're:

- you're = you are: "You're going to the park; I'm not."
- your = possessive of 'you': "Your book is red; mine is green."
- E.g., "You're going to your car; I'm going to my car." This means: You are going to the car that belongs to you

4.8.2 their vs. they're vs. there:

- their = possessive of 'they': "This is their car, not your car."
- they're = they are: "They're going to their car; I'm going to my car."
- there = at that location: "There's your book"
- E.g., "They're going to their car, which they parked over there." This means: They are going to the car that belongs to them, which they parked in that place.

4.8.3 of vs. have:

'would of' is always incorrect. It should be 'would have': "I would have let you drive my car."