Writing Papers

by Prof.Dr. Jaap H. de Wilde
Centre for European Studies, University of Twente

October, 2004

Below, you will find an overview with practical guidelines for writing research papers. Use them in all your courses. Adapt them to your own stylistic preferences. Discover the craftmanship of writing.

I TITLE PAGE

Mention on everything you write:

- Title & Subtitle

Even if you do not know the final title yet, think up a working title. This forces you to look for the essence of your analysis in a one-liner.

- Your Name & Student Registration Number

- The Date

This has two functions: *practical* – you can trace back and distinguish the various versions of your work; *concerning the content* – if someone reads your work years from now, s/he can put it in the right (historical) context. It makes, e.g., a big difference whether articles on terrorism are written before or after September 11, 2001.

- The Context of the Paper (e.g., the course you write it for).

II STRUCTURE

In general, every analysis – whether it is a short research paper, a MA-Thesis or a dissertation – has the following structure:

- Introduction
- Theory & Methodology
- Elaboration / Analysis
- Conclusion
- Reference List

The **Introduction** provides an argument explaining your interest in the central research topic, leading to a clearly formulated research question. Next, the Introduction explains how the central research question is elaborated in the subsequent sections. It ends with an overview of the structure of the paper.

The Introduction should convince a reader that this is an interesting paper indeed.

Note: The Introduction needs to be written twice: before you conduct your research, in order to structure your thoughts and to determine a research strategy; after you have completed your research, in order to structure the coherence of your argument.

The section about **Theory & Methodology** clarifies the academic approach you have taken. Theoretical considerations are important especially if you want to position your work in a specific school of thought and/or a discipline (e.g., neo-liberal institutionalism; multilevel governance approaches; comparative politics; system theory; legal theory). Theoretical considerations help to give your analysis root at a higher level of abstraction.

Some of the methodological considerations are also of a theoretical nature. Like theory, they are about choosing between different approaches (e.g., behaviourism, social constructivism, historical materialism, reflectivism). Other methodological considerations are of a strategic nature, and still others of a tactical nature. The main strategic choice to be made within every theoretical approach is between qualitative and quantitative research: does your analysis essentially rely on an argumentation or on empirical evidence? Choices at the tactical level of research are about the

operationalisation of your research question. Which variables and indicators are used to analyse the subject?

Additionally, there are different types of research, e.g.: a review of literature (secondary sources); an analysis of treaties, laws, minutes of meetings, parliamentary reports etc. (primary sources); interviews, simulations, statistical research etc.

The section on Theory & Methodology should convince a reader that this paper presents a solid and sound analysis.

Note: Especially in short papers, the Introduction and the Methodology section can be combined. This means that the argumentation leading to the central research question and to its elaboration into sub-questions includes a brief discussion of theoretical and methodological choices.

The **Elaboration** or **Analysis** can take various Sections (or, in larger works, Chapters). Make it a habit to deal in every Section with one of the sub-questions identified in the Introduction. This way, the structure of your paper will reflect the structure of your argument. Here, the actual work needs to be done: digging into the details of your sources, weighing the pros and cons of interpretations, balancing costs and benefits, identifying crucial developments etcetera. Every section needs to end with a sub-conclusion: what answers have been found to the relevant research question, and how are these results used in the following sections?

The **Conclusion** needs to sum up the sub-conclusions and put them together in order to answer the central research question. There needs to be a one-to-one relationship with the Introduction: every question raised in the Introduction needs to be addressed in the Conclusion. This does not imply straightforward answers by definition. Many societal topics are too complex for that. It does imply, however, that a reader will feel better informed and intellectually inspired having read your analysis.

The Conclusion can also be used to reflect on the methodological and theoretical implications of the research project itself. Are you satisfied with the quality of the data and arguments?

Finally, in the Conclusion you can make recommendations of various kinds: e.g., policy advice based on your findings, or suggestions for further research.

Structure of a Paper

Table of Contents	Task	Sources
1. Introduction	Explain topic/subject Formulate Main Research Question & Sub-Questions	Highlights from the literature to illustrate the topic and the controversies about it.
2. Theory & Methodology	Explain Methodological Set-Up & Theoretical Approach	Standard Methodology Books; Relevant Theoretical Studies
3. Elaboration/Analysis	Sub-Question 1 > Sub-Conclusion	Selected information from various sources.
4. Elaboration/Analysis	Sub-Question 2 > Sub-Conclusion	Selected information from various sources.
5. Elaboration/Analysis	Sub-Question 3 > Sub-Conclusion	Selected information from various sources.
... n Elaboration/Analysis	Sub-Question *n* > Sub-Conclusion	Selected information from various sources.
n+1. Conclusion	- Summary of Sub-Conclusions - Overall Conclusion - Reflection on Method. (optional) - Recommendations (optional)	*No sources needed*
Reference List	Correct presentation of sources	Mention all sources used

III REFERENCES

Various methods exist to refer to sources on which research is based. Literature is the dominant source in social sciences. The reference system described here is widely used (sometimes referred to as the Harvard system). Whatever system you use, apply it consistently.

Begin by making an alphabetical reference list, which you put at the end of your paper. In the text of your paper, you make references to this list simply by mentioning the name of the publication's author, the year of publication, and (if required) the relevant pages.

Examples:

1. "… Research has shown that chances of war between democratic states are very low (Maoz & Russett, 1993). …"
2. "… According to Guéhenno (1994, p. 9), people have forgotten the meaning of notions such as democracy, freedom and politics. …" – or: Guéhenno (1994: 9).

An alternative style is to use footnotes for the same kind of references:

3. "… Research has shown that chances of war between democratic states are very low.[1] …"
4. "… According to Guéhenno, people have forgotten the meaning of notions such as democracy, freedom and politics.[2] …"

In the Reference List these publications should be listed as follows:

Guéhenno, Jean-Marie (1994), *La fin de la Démocratie*, Paris: Editions Flammarion.
Maoz, Zeev & Bruce Russett (1993), "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, Nr. 3, pp. 624-638.

[1] Maoz & Russett, 1993.
[2] Guéhenno, 1994, p. 9.

Publications in the Reference List must be listed in full detail.

You are well advised to document the relevant data of every book, article or website as soon as you use it (it can take weeks to retrace the relevant article and page of that brilliant quote you want to use).

These are the four most common sources:
1. Books
2. Articles in journals
3. Articles in books
4. Websites

Ad 1 Include in book references:

- Surname(s) of the author(s) with their initials or first names;
- Indicate if they are the editors;[3]
- Year of publication;[4]
- Title of the Book;
- Publisher and place of publication.

Note: The use of commas, italics, quotation marks, colons, periods, and brackets has to be very precise. There are different editorial styles, but there is consensus that book titles and journal titles are never bracketed. Generally, they are in italics.

Examples:

1. Example of a monograph (a single-authored book):

Dahl, Robert A. (1998), *On Democracy*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

2. Example of a multi-authored book:

Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998), *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner.

[3] There is a difference between monographs, multi-authored books, and edited volumes.
[4] In case of revised editions, always refer to the version you have used. You can add the first year of publication as extra information (see examples).

3. Example of an edited volume:

Baylis, John and Steve Smith, Eds. (2001), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Examples of some odd cases:

Clausewitz, Carl von (1982), *Over de oorlog*, Bussum: Wereldvenster, (translation of *Vom Kriege* book I, II and III, first published in 1832, 1833 and 1834).

Hobbes, Thomas, edited by Michael Oakeshott (1946), *Leviathan. Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, (first published in 1651).

Urwin, Derek W. (1995), *The Community of Europe. A History of European Integration Since 1945*, London: Longman, (2nd rev. edition; first published in 1991).

Note: In English all main words in a title are spelled with a capital. In French, German and Dutch this is not the case.

Note: Subtitles are best preceded by a colon, but full stops are widely used as well.

Note: Edited volumes are books in which the chapters are written by various authors. In libraries and search machines, they are registered on the names of the volume editors. Their names can be found on the cover and title pages of the book. The edited volume as such has the status of a book, with the editors mentioned as its authors (see Example 3). Every chapter, however, has the status of an independent article. If you use a chapter from an edited volume, refer to the author of that chapter. For example:

Christiansen, Thomas (2001), "European and Regional Integration", in: John Baylis and Steve Smith, Eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 494-518.

Or, in case Baylis & Smith are already listed in your Reference List:

Christiansen, Thomas (2001), "European and Regional Integration", in: Baylis and Smith, 2001: 494-518.

Ad 2 Include in references to <u>articles in journals</u>:

- Surname(s) of the author(s) with their initials or first names;
- Year of publication;
- Title of the Article;
- Title of the Journal;
- Volume number of the Journal;
- Issue number of the Journal;
- Page numbers of the Article.

Example:

Goetz, K.H. (1995), "National Governance and European Integration: Intergovernmental Relations in Germany", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 91-116.

Ad 3 Include in references to <u>articles in books</u>:

- Name(s) of the author(s) of the Article;
- Year of publication;
- Title of the Article (= Book Chapter);
- Name(s) of the book editor(s);
- Title of the Edited Volume;
- Publisher and place of publication;
- Page numbers of the Article (Book Chapter).

Example:

Keohane, Robert O. (1993), "Sovereignty, Interdependence, and International Institutions", in: L.B. Miller and M.J. Smith, Eds., *Ideas & Ideals, Essays in Honor of Stanley Hoffmann*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 91-108.

<u>Note</u>: It frequently happens that an author has various publications in one year. In that case they are alphabetised, both in the text and in the Reference List.

Example:

Ripley, Randall B. & James M. Lindsay (1997a), *U.S. Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsberg Press.

Ripley, Randall B. & James M. Lindsay (1997b), "Promise Versus Reality: Continuity and Change After the Cold War", in Ripley & Lindsay (1997a), pp. 313-330.

Ad 4 Websites

As far as I know, so far no standard academic conventions for website references exist. One of the problems with website references is that the content of websites changes frequently. This hampers academic reliability criteria that facts, data, quotations, alleged opinions etc. should be verifiable. Especially in the long run this can cause problems. There is a growing practice, therefore, to mention the date you have consulted the website you are referring to.

Additionally, URL addresses can be very cryptic and therefore of little use to the reader, e.g. www.coe.int. You are well advised to refer in the Reference List to relevant organisation.

Example:

Council of Europe: www.coe.int, visited at 10 April 2004.

It may happen that you want to refer to authors whose work you have not studied yourself. These are indirect (secondary) references. How to do this? There are different options, and it can easily go wrong. Consider the following line:

"According to Benedict Anderson nationalism is the product of 'print capitalism': mass production of books and pamphlets helped to establish national symbols and create a shared myth of the past."

In academic writing reference to the source of such a statement is obligatory. If you have read Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities* you can refer to it directly. The sentence then looks like this:

"According to Benedict Anderson (1991: 37-46) nationalism is the product of 'print capitalism': mass production of books and pamphlets helped to establish national symbols and create a shared myth of the past."

(The full reference to Anderson must be included in the Reference List.)

However, if you have not read *Imagined Communities* you cannot refer to it directly. There are two options:

"According to Benedict Anderson nationalism is the product of 'print capitalism': mass production of books and pamphlets helped to establish national symbols and create a shared myth of the past.[5] "

"According to Benedict Anderson nationalism is the product of 'print capitalism': mass production of books and pamphlets helped to establish national symbols and create a shared myth of the past (cf. Linklater, 2001: 620)."

(The full reference to Linklater must be included in the Reference List.[6] You are not allowed to include Allison's work in your Reference List, simply because you have not consulted it.)

IV FOOTNOTES & ENDNOTES

It is up to editors and publishers to decide about house styles, including the type of notes they want you to use. In general, however, footnotes (i.e., notes at the bottom of a page) are to be preferred for endnotes (i.e., notes at the end of a text) because they save a lot of reading time. Put note numbers at the end of a sentence, after the punctuation mark.[7]

Footnotes & endnotes serve two purposes:

1. References to literature (see the various examples above).

2. Comments and sidetracks that do not fit the main line of reasoning, but that are an enrichment of the content.

Example of a sidetrack:[8]

---

[5] Anderson, Benedict (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, as quoted by Linklater, 2001, p. 620.

[6] Linklater, Andrew (2001), "Globalization and the Transformation of Political Community", in Baylis & Smith (2001), pp. 617-633.

[7] This is an example of a correct footnote.

[8] In the context of discussing the preference of footnotes, it is good to realize that up to the mid-1980s it was much harder to work with them for the simple lack of pc's, let alone suitable computer software.

Note: Be restrictive in using this second purpose. Yet, during the process of writing your text, footnotes can be of great help: they allow you to elaborate thoughts, put reminders in your text etcetera. In a later phase, you can decide what to do with them: include them in your text or delete them.

V VARIOUS TIPS

Don't steal words, use your own!

It is forbidden to copy (or translate literally) sentences or paragraphs from any source without clearly indicating who or what you are quoting. Of course, plagiarism is prohibited, but there is also a more positive reason to abandon this. A researcher weakens the quality of her work by pretending the results are hers only. By making reference to the sources of your information and insights, you add their intellectual power to yours.

Especially in the beginning of your career, it may seem hard to develop your own points of view on the subject you study. Others have devoted substantial parts of their lives to a topic you merely study for a few months in the context of a course. So, finding your own words may look difficult. The solution is to use various sources. In comparing and contrasting them, you need to use your own words, based on your own choices.

In case a section contains a lot of factual information, it can be helpful to explain at the beginning on which sources it is based. This way you can avoid that every sentence requires a footnote.

Do not present a compilation of quotations, but present an analysis. Frequent use of quotes reveals an inability to master the subject. Be selective with quotations. Use them only in particular cases: for striking statements or carefully formulated definitions of complex concepts.

Make a good layout, especially for paragraphs.

Finally, write often and much!
Stylistic skills can be learned and developed only by training.