

Writing a paper in social sciences for a university course

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PART I Introduction and purpose

Table 1. Bloom's classification of the six levels of knowledge and skills

Level	Elements	Description
Knowledge	Facts Methods Procedures Principles	Define, describe, copy, identify, list, mention, limit, detect, inform, collect, acquire
Comprehension	Rephrasing/processing of information Interpretation of information Extrapolation	Distinguish, explain, generalise, exemplify, rephrase, summarise, consider
Application	Use of 1 + 2	Apply, change, calculate, demonstrate, modify, predict, relate to, show, solve, process (data), utilise

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Analysis	Of constituent parts Of relationships Between parts and structures Classification	Show in diagram, differentiate, categorise, illustrate, combine, process, compute, analyse
Synthesis	Independent formulation of own thoughts, feelings, experience and observations Development of plans or suggested procedures Forming abstract relations	Compromise, compose, create, produce, regroup, revise, implement, control, develop, cooperate
Evaluation	Evaluation based on internal criteria (logic coherence, accuracy, consistency) Evaluation based on external criteria (aims, preferences)	Evaluate, contrast, criticise, distinguish, defend, interpret, substantiate, implement, action plan

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PART II The problem, problem formulation and hypothesis

1. Phase Idea → Subject → Problem formulation → Hypothesis
2. Phase Testing of the hypothesis
3. Phase Making the results explicit, i.e. writing the paper

Table 2. An explained check-list for selecting your topic

Choice of topic	Comments
Is my topic relevant to the course?	
Is my topic interesting?	
Is my topic properly defined?	
Is my topic "researchable"?	

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Democracy

Idea: Something about how to strengthen democracy
Subject: Democracy and decentralisation
Problem formulation: Is decentralisation good for democracy
Hypothesis: Decentralisation is good for democracy because,
 a) people are more inclined to participate in local affairs
 b) local government posts provide training and experience to national leaders

Decentralisation is good for democracy

Decentralisation is good for democracy, because people are more inclined to participate in local affairs

Decentralisation is good for democracy, because people are more inclined to participate in local affairs and local government posts provide training and experience to national leaders

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1. Be careful with your problem formulation and your hypothesis. These guide your paper and your analysis. The more refined, the better.
2. Be careful with your data. The problem formulation and the hypothesis selects your data, but it is up to your skills how well you can master the data and make it available for a test of the hypothesis.
3. Often one string of data is not enough. In the example we had to compare over time to get additional data to support our analysis.

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PART III Structure and writing the paper

1. A formulation of the problem
2. An analysis that is in accordance with the problem formulated
3. A conclusion that puts together the results from the analysis
4. References, notes and a literature list

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Table 3. An example of the first structure outline and text-file

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction. Present the importance of the idea
 - 1.1 Problem formulation
 - 2.0 Analysis
 - 2.1 Discuss democracy and decentralisation. Begin to use the theory
 - 2.2 Making the problem formulation operational – development of hypotheses, developing the research design. Explicit use of theory
 - 2.3 Testing of hypotheses
 - 2.3.1 Testing the first part of the hypothesis: Decentralisation is good for democracy, because people are more inclined to participate in local affairs
 - 2.3.2 Testing the second part of the hypothesis: Decentralisation is good for democracy, because local government posts provide training and experience to national leaders
 - 2.4 Summarising the results with respect to the problem formulation, discuss
 - 3.0 Conclusion
- Literature list

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PART IV Presentation of your analysis

Title

Tables and figures

Layout

Language and paragraphs

1. Illustration of the idea
2. Documentation
3. Contrast different views
4. “Divide and rule”

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PART V References, literature and quotations

References and the reference system

1. The author’s name
2. The title of the book
3. The place where it is published, i.e. where it is edited
4. The publisher
5. The year it is published
6. Possible page reference or chapter reference

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Name of the author, *Title: Subtitle*, Publishers place: Publishing company, Year. Page(s)

Name of the author, “Title of article”, *Journal name*, Vol. x, p. xx-x, Year

Name of the 1st author et al., *Title*, Publishers place: Publishing company, Year. Page(s)

Name of the editor (ed.), *Title*, Publishers place: Publishing company, Year. Page(s)

Name of the author, “Title of article”, in Name of the editor (ed.), *Title*, Publishers place: Publishing company, Year. Page(s)

Name of the author, *Title: Subtitle in original language _translated title_*, Publishers place: Publishing company, Year. Page(s)

Interviewed person’s name, *Interview*, date

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Quotations

Using the same system all the way through

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PART VI Final advice

- 1. Rome was not built in a day. Neither is a good paper.**
- 2. Team up with or ally yourself with a friend.**
- 3. Make a plan when you start the process of writing the paper.**
- 4. Create your own routines and a writer's nest.**