

Recommendations for Better Research

Ross Levine

These are guidelines that I developed for my Ph.D. students when I taught at Virginia. I believe they are worthwhile. Graduate students should have an approximately one-page write-up that addresses the following issues. **The text in quotes should be used verbatim.**

Purpose: “The purpose of this research is to”

Motivation: “This is a worthwhile question because “

“If the results turn out this way, then ... “

“If the results turn out this other way, then”

(Try to avoid questions where only one answer is interesting; if you find yourself hoping for one result, this is not a great sign. If you find yourself describing certain results as “good” and other results as “bad” or results that “didn’t work,” that is not a great sign.)

(The motivation should not mention previous research. Why is this issue inherently interesting, regardless of past research.)

Literature: “Past research on this question has shown”

“There are the following important weaknesses in this literature ...”

“My research will mitigate the following weaknesses ... “

“My research still has the following weaknesses ...”

(Do not write a string of abstracts.)

Methodology: “This research will achieve its purpose by” Make sure you directly link the method to the purpose! {Then discuss data, econometric technique and why, specification improvements and why.}

Then, start implementing this methodology and discuss problems.