

Hints on writing a good publication  
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Things for students to check in a paper or thesis

1. Use a spell checker in Word or ispell in Linux to correct the text
2. Make sure you read everything written at least once, preferably aloud!
3. Although it is faster to use Word in the beginning, it is time consuming at the last stages of document preparation. Use Latex template for the document whether possible.
4. Single subsections such as 1.1 without 1.2 should not be used. Add more subsections or integrate those into text.
5. Do not use more subsections levels than three. I.e., Section 1.3.4.5 is not OK.
6. If you borrow text from elsewhere use “quotation marks” and cite the source.
7. Double check that all figures have captions and all figures are referred to in text.
8. Refer to figures and sections as “in Figure 1”. Use unbreakable space (~ in Latex) before the number to avoid breaking across the line.
9. If you use a period "." in the end of figure captions, make sure it is consistent through the document.
10. If you borrow a picture from somewhere, put citation directly to caption as [3].
11. As a rule, avoid bullet lists but write text in paragraphs.
12. Figures should have sufficient resolution and not be blurry. Prefer a vector format (such as esp) to raster formats (such as jpeg).
13. If you import charts from Excel, use white background (not the default gray one).
14. Text in figures should be easily readable (font size equal to body text in document).
15. Make sure section titles are not hanging on the last row on a page (especially common for Word).
16. Make sure that bibliography is formatted consistently and has sufficient details for each article (volume, number, page numbers, month and year of publication, etc.).
17. When using Bibtex, remember to put an extra {} around acronyms such as TCP to avoid loosing the capital letters.
18. If you use capital letters in section titles, make sure it is consistent in all document.
19. For online references, give a date when URL was last checked.
20. All references should be cited in text.
21. The target size of a Master’s thesis is between 60 and 80 pages.
22. Technical details not necessary to understand the document should be given as appendices.

Read a good guide on scientific writing such as “The Elements of Style”. Here are some tips

1. Use active voice. Instead of “The method we followed” write “We follow a method...”

2. Make the paragraph a unit of composition. A paragraph should convey a single idea usually given already in the first sentence. Usually a paragraph longer than 10 lines should be split into two.
3. If English is not your native language, avoid writing long and complex sentences. Short and clear ones are better.
4. Use consistent terms through the document. There is no need to look for synonyms as in literature writing, using a single term is preferable even if it repeats several times in a single paragraph.
5. Avoid words that can be deleted without affecting the sense. Instead of “in order to understand” simply “to understand” is sufficient.
6. Remember tricky parts of English grammar. No future and past tense together, conditional forms “if I were you...”, “Let X be ...”,
7. Each singular noun in English should have an article “a” or “the” unless it is an abstract term.
8. Make sure to tell *what and why* you do before telling *how* it is done.
9. Avoid colloquial forms such as *doesn't* (write does not) and *like* (write such as).
10. Do not confuse its and it's (it's is a short form of *it is* that you do not need to use at all).
11. Make sure to define terms and acronyms on the first use (except most common ones, such as TCP).