

Jørgen Carling

The anatomy of an academic paper: a brief guide (3rd Edition)

This document gives an overview of key aspects of formatting an academic paper — unwritten rules or good practice that can be applied to create a professional and reader-friendly document. Presenting your text in a professional way enhances your credibility as an author. If the paper is to be submitted to a journal, more detailed formatting guidelines must be consulted. (The text in this document is for illustration only.)

Analysing remittance flows

Jørgen Carling¹

This paper will first discuss available data on remittances and their handling in international balance of payments statistics. This will be followed by a presentation of major features of the remittance flows that these statistics reveal. The subsequent two sections address the variety of remittance types, and a basic model of remittance flows that can be used as a frame of reference to explain their fluctuations. Finally, the social dynamics of remittances flows are discussed.

Remittance data

Data on remittances originate primarily from two sources: information collected by central banks and published as part of the balance of payments statistics, and information from sample surveys among remittance senders and receivers. Surveys can be used to understand how patterns of remittance transfer and expenditure are associated with other characteristics and behaviour of remittance senders and receivers. They can also reveal information about that part of remittances which are not transferred through formal channels. However, surveys on remittances are few and far between in relation to the volume and complexity of global remittance flows, and their value is often reduced by methodological problems (Bilsborrow *et al.* 1997).

There are three different items in the balance of payments that relate to migrants' transfer of value across international boundaries: 1) *compensation of employees*, which are wages, salaries and other benefits paid to non-resident workers; 2) *workers' remittances*, which are transfers made by migrants who are considered residents in the country where they are employed; and 3) *migrants' transfers*, which are assets or liabilities that migrants take with them when they move from one country to another.

The three categories are often added together to give a figure of total remittances. One reason for this is that countries differ as to how transfers are categorized in practice. Also, it is of limited importance for assessment of the impact of remittances in the recipient country whether the remittance-sending migrant is a long-term resident abroad or not.

If you expect someone to be proofreading or edit the text by hand, use double line spacing. If not, tighter spacing is more reader-friendly and saves paper. The spacing here is 1.25.

Having left-aligned or justified paragraphs is largely a matter of taste. If you use justified alignment, make sure it only applies to the text, not to tables or headings).

Left-aligned	Justified
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The norm in academic writing (as in all books and journals) is to start each paragraph with an indent, and not to separate paragraphs with blank lines. The first paragraph after a heading is usually not indented. Spacing (or blank lines) between paragraphs is common in non-academic or technical reports:

Academic/literary	Technical
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¹ Research Professor, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).
E-mail: jorgen@prio.org. Twitter: [@jorgencarling](https://twitter.com/jorgencarling) Personal website: jorgencarling.org

Table 1. Remittance flows in and out of Sri Lanka, 2002, USD millions

	Credit (in)	Debit (out)	Net
Compensation of employees	9	-14	-5
Workers' remittances	1287	-190	1097
Migrants' transfers	13	-6	7
<i>Total</i>	<i>1309</i>	<i>-210</i>	<i>1100</i>

Source: International Monetary Fund (2003).

Each of the three flows can have counter-flows in the opposite direction. Some of the world's largest recipients of remittances are also destinations for migrants from neighbouring countries and therefore experience a small outflow of remittances as well as the large inflow. However, remittances data are usually presented as inflows and not as net inflows (i.e. inflow minus outflow) since the volume of the outward remittances has no impact on the importance of inward remittances in the economy.

Sri Lanka is among the few developing countries that report the size of both credit and debit flows for all three migration-related balance of payments categories. Table 1 presents the respective flows, of which inward workers' remittances dominate. In discussing the impact of remittances in the Sri Lankan economy, it is the total of the inward flows, 1.3 billion dollars, that is the most relevant figure.

Remittance statistics for entire regions or income-level country groups are affected by the fact that many countries have incomplete statistics. Figure 1 presents the availability of data on workers' remittances during the ten-year period 1992-2001. Out of all the 208 economies surveyed by the World Bank, almost half reported no data on inward workers' remittances during this period, and only a quarter reported data each year. The picture is somewhat better for the 152 economies with more than a million inhabitants, but still only a third have complete statistics. Among the 42 low and middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with more than a million inhabitants, nearly half reported no remittances statistics during this ten-year period. As shown in Figure 1, the availability of data is better in West Africa than in Central and Southern Africa.

The social dynamics of remittances

Sending and receiving remittances is not only an economic transaction, but a form of exchange between individuals that takes place in a fairly intricate social context. The remainder of this chapter address some of the principal aspects of the social dynamics of remittances.

Motivations for remitting

Development economists have pointed to three different types of motivation for sending remittances. First, *altruism* implies that migrants remit money simply because they care about the well-being of the receivers. Second, migrants can remit out of *self-interest* when this makes them eligible for inheritance or other resources in the community of origin. Third, remittances can be motivated by informal contracts of *insurance* whereby family members in different locations reduce risks by sharing a portion of their income.

Non-text material is either a *Table* (any grid with numbers and/or text), a *Figure* (charts, maps, photographs, etc.) or a *Text box*. Tables and figures and boxes are numbered as separate series.

Tables and figures have titles (captions) that include essential information about time periods and units of measurement. The norm is to place titles *above* tables and *below* figures.

Tables look best with simple formatting, such as here. Horizontal lines above and below the header and the total is usually enough. Columns with numbers should be right-aligned.

Information about the data source is given below the table. If the source is a publication, it appears in the list of references.

Tables and figures are referred to in the text by their number. Don't refer to figures as being 'above' or 'below', since this could change if the paper is published. Every table and figure must be referred to in the text, either within in a sentence, as here, or in brackets, like a citation: (Table 1).

Automatic heading styles (*Heading 1* etc in Word) ensure that the structure is clear, that a heading is never left alone at the bottom of a page, and that you can use the 'Navigation pane' to see the structure of your paper and re-organize the sections. You can change the appearance of headings if (like me) you don't like the default typefaces. Bold for Heading 1 and Italics (not bold) for Heading 2, as shown here, is often good.

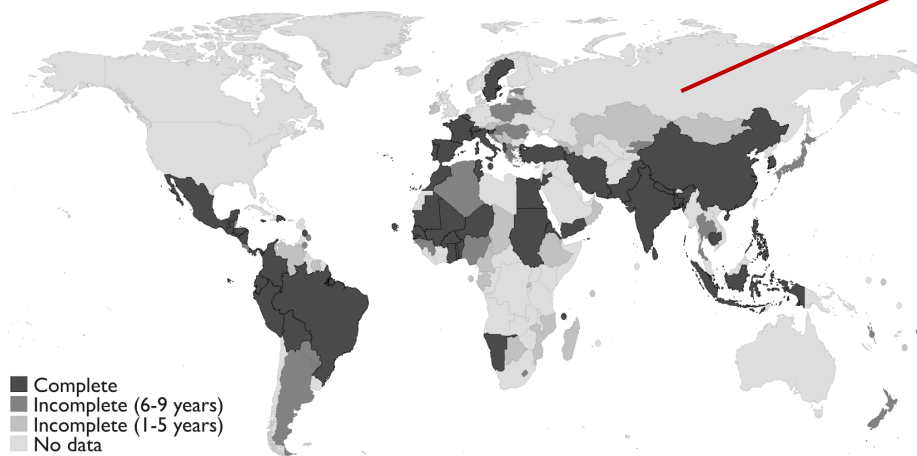


Figure 1. Availability of data on workers' remittances 1992-2001

Source: World Bank (2003). Refers to data on inward workers' remittances.

Place figures and tables at a convenient point in the paper, near their mention in the text. They always look best at the top or bottom of the page.

If a manuscript is prepared for submission to a journal, tables and figures must be placed in separate files. A note such as [Table 1 about here] in a paragraph of its own is then used to indicate the placement of each table and figure.

Figure captions are placed below the figure, with information about the source immediately below the caption.

The latter motivation has been emphasized in the so-called New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) (Drèze and Sen 1989, Lucas and Stark 1985, Stark 1995). This line of research argues that labour migration is a *risk-reducing* as much as an income-maximizing strategy, and that correcting failures in local capital and insurance markets is a more efficient strategy for reducing migration than intervening in the labour market (Taylor *et al.* 1996). While these economic theories are useful tools for thinking about remittances and policy options, there is a danger in overlooking the cultural dynamics at hand.

Italics are used for emphasis in the text as well as for foreign words. Underlining or bold is never used for emphasis in academic texts.

In many societies of origin, the obligation to remit is firmly rooted in a culture of migration, and emigrants who fail to fulfil this obligation are frowned upon. (Åkesson 2004, Carling 2001). Complying with the expectation could, in economic terms, be seen as an act of self-interest. Åkesson (2004:95) writes that

Long quotes (e.g. 40 words or more) are placed as an indented text block with a slightly smaller font and extra space above and below. Do not use quotation marks or italics. The quote may be a continuation of the preceding sentence, as in this case, and, in that case does not have an initial capital letter.

according to those who *have* stayed in the village, the majority of these women left in order to support their *familia*, and now they regularly send remittances back to husbands and parents, who, thanks to this economic contribution, can construct a 'migrant's house' (*kaza d'emigrant*) and benefit from a stable standard of living.

Ethnographic studies of the complexity of relations between migrants and non-migrant relatives indicate that seeing motivations to remit as a two-dimensional continuum from altruism to self-interest is overly simplistic (Gowricharn 2004, Levitt 2001, Mahler 2001, Strijp 1997). The question of who is supporting whom is at the heart of social relations, Åkesson (2004:153) writes, and remittances are therefore 'not just a bit of money going from one part of the world to another'.

Shorter quotes are placed in the running text with quotation marks. In British English, single quotation marks are used, with double quotation marks reserved for quotes within quotes. In American English it's the other way around. Do not use italics.

Remittances and family dynamics

In many cases, remittances are best understood as intra-family obligations being sustained despite the geographical separation of the family. In countries without an adequate old age pension system, it is often taken for granted that adult children support their elderly parents. If the children emigrate they may be in a better position to provide this support, and there is not necessarily any reason why their obligation or commitment to providing it should decline.

As pointed out above, a geographically divided family in which the members support each other financially provides a form of insurance for itself. However, the distance between family members also creates conditions of asymmetric in-

Remember to add page numbers.

formation. The remitter cannot directly observe the activities of the recipients and therefore has limited influence on how the remittances affect the behaviour and spending of the receiving household (Azam and Gubert 2002, Chami *et al.* 2003). This can often be a source of tension or conflicts between family members.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, remittances have two rather different types of origin: workers who are employed abroad for a limited period, usually without their families (e.g. Bangladeshi workers in the Gulf and Filipina maids in Hong Kong) and established emigrant communities (e.g. Sri Lankans in Canada or Pakistanis in Norway). With short-term workers abroad, the number of people deployed, and their available resources are key determinants of remittances, while the propensity to remit is likely to be high and stable. In the case of established emigrant communities, remittance flows are more vulnerable to a decline in the propensity to remit.

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Typefaces make a difference.

The main body of the text should be in a serif font (e.g. Book Antiqua, Cambria, Century Schoolbook, Times New Roman). (Serifs are the small lines at the end of some strokes, which ease the visual flow of the text)

Sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial, Calibri, Gill Sans, Myriad) are good for headings, as well as for tables and captions.

References can be in the same font size as the main text, or slightly smaller. A common formatting is 'hanging' paragraphs, where the second and subsequent lines are indented and it is easy to follow the alphabet down the author names. The hanging indent here is 0.25 cm.

Professionally formatting a document requires basic knowledge of key functions in the word processing software. These are the most important things to be familiar with in Microsoft Word:

- Setting alignment, indents, spacing, etc. in the **paragraph dialog box**. ([See how](#))
- Applying **built-in styles**, such as Heading 1 and Heading 2 ([See how](#))
- Modifying styles or creating **your own styles**, e.g. for indented quotes or references ([See how](#))

If your document has many tables and/or figures it is a huge advantage to use automatically numbered **captions** and **cross-references** in the text. This makes sure that the numbering is updated if figures are moved or deleted. ([See how](#))

For slightly more **advanced layout** (e.g. tables and figures locked to the top of a page with the text floating past) you need familiarity with 'text wrapping', 'position' and 'anchor'. ([See how](#))