

## Preface to the First Edition

This book consists of three essays offering advice to young economists working on their dissertations, preparing their first papers for submission to a professional journal, getting ready to give their first presentation at a conference or their first job seminar, or facing their first refereeing assignment.

The division of the work into three chapters on writing papers, giving talks, and writing referee reports is somewhat arbitrary. Most advice on writing well also applies to speaking well; and the criteria for evaluating a paper for journal publication are, of course, relevant to writing one's own papers. Thus, the three essays inevitably overlap. Nevertheless, there are enough issues that relate specifically to each activity to justify the separation. Also, having been written on different occasions, the three chapters differ much in style and tone—a variety I hope will make them easier to read.

The way we write or speak is largely a matter of taste. In a number of cases, I could well imagine that you will make a different choice from the one I suggest. Therefore, if I use the imperative mode extensively, it is only because preceding each piece of advice with an apology would have been tiresome. What is most important is that you become aware of the issues. How you resolve each of them should be the result of a deliberate decision made with specific application and particular audience in mind. However, if I have no intention of mounting to the barricades to uphold my position on punctuation at the end of displayed formulae, I certainly would take up arms in defense of clarity, simplicity, and unity. "I like what is structured, clear and concise" (Henri Tomasi, composer, 1909–1971), and I hope you do too.

It is, of course, with some trepidation that I publish advice on writing. I can't help wondering how many of my own recommendations I have violated. With luck I will have the opportunity to revise the book for a

second edition and eliminate some of its remaining imperfections. But this is a task I will not be able to accomplish on my own. Please write to me. I must have omitted issues you care about. And you will almost certainly disagree with some of my advice. Moreover, the essays would be enriched by a discussion of problems specific to areas other than those I am familiar with. I invite you to send me suggestions for expanding the scope of the essays to make them better guides to writing and speaking about other subjects (wth2@troi.cc.rochester.edu).

**Added to the second edition.** The main difference between the first and second editions is that the latter contains a new essay, “Being a Graduate Student in Economics.” I have added some material to “Writing Papers,” and I have rewritten “Giving Talks” to account for the intervening changes in technology, as virtually all speakers use presentation software nowadays; transparencies have virtually disappeared, and blackboards are used very occasionally.