

Submit a Post to *On Balance: Perspectives from the Field* for the Society of Benefit-Cost Analysis

How to Submit

Pitches and potential posts, as well as follow-up correspondence may be submitted via email to the *On Balance* editor at <mailto:info@benefitcostanalysis.org>. Please include your name, email address, and a two or three sentence bio. Describe any potential conflicts of interest (financial or otherwise), such as funding source or affiliations that are relevant.

What to Submit

Before submitting a post, authors are encouraged to review the content in *On Balance* to get a sense of the style and content of the blog posts. The feature is intended to provide short, informative, practical, and timely articles relevant to the theory and practice of benefit-cost analysis. Posts can address an array of topics: commentary, work in progress, book reviews, perspectives on conferences and events, interviews with an economist, to name a few. (See [the List of Feature Types and Lengths](#) later in this document for more guidance.) Posts vary in length from 500 to 1,100 words, depending on the topic and inclination of the author.

Posts should be on topics of interest to, and written at a level appropriate for Society members. Posts should be balanced and emphasize economics. Political statements should be avoided, but policy implications are appropriate and welcomed. A partial exception would be commentary pieces, which can take a particular position, but should still do so by presenting evidence and analysis.

Please keep the following guidelines in mind:(see also the [Style Guide](#) later in this document for more guidance):

- Drafts should be submitted in MS Word.
- The posts do not include technical footnotes, but can include a short reference list of books or journal articles (using standard in-text citations of author and year). When you prepare the reference list, please be sure that it includes the information on the reference, and not a link to your internal library system.
- In addition to references, you are also encouraged to include hyperlinks to relevant material freely available at government agencies or non-governmental organizations, at newspapers or magazines, presentations, or other material.
- Hyperlinks to author webpages and to relevant blogs on other websites (or to *On Balance* blog posts) are also acceptable.
- References to relevant articles or special issues of the Journal of Benefit-Costs Analysis are encouraged.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When hyperlinking to material not included in the reference list, the report or link should be mentioned in the text, and the link to be added at that point should be included in a comment bubble in the MS Word document. For example: Include in the text "A recent report from CBO on tax incentives" and then provide a hyperlink in a comment bubble at the point of insertion. *Please do not hyperlink directly from your text.*

Tips on Writing for the Web

A blog is not a journal article. We recommend the following tips for writing for *On Balance*:

- **Be concise.** Your content should be concise and readable. The ideal blog length is around 700 words. All blogs are kept to under 1,100 words.
- **Get to the point quickly.** The first few paragraphs should contain the most important information; the reader should get your main points quickly, or understand the structure of your argument right at the beginning.
- **Keep paragraphs short—no longer than 5-7 lines.** Readers will be looking for key ideas and nuances; your points should be accessible and clear.
- **Finish strong.** Your concluding paragraph is important: what is the takeaway message for the reader?

LIST OF FEATURES TYPES AND LENGTHS

The following lists types of blog posts that can be published in *On Balance*. If you have another idea for a different type of blog post, we are certainly open to suggestions. All features should be balanced, and cover topics of interest to the membership.

Article Tie-in

Suggested Word Length: 600-700

A summary/discussion of an article in the current issue of the Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis or another relevant journal, written by author. The piece should go beyond a simple summary of the approach and results/conclusions, and put the research into a broader context.

Economics Will Travel / Reporting from the Field

Suggested Word Length: 600

A description of life in a particular job, a description of a job detail in another country or another job, or a trip. These features may target students curious about what it is like to work in the field of benefit-cost analysis, or others thinking about what it means to be a professional economist working on benefit-cost analysis or related issues.

Book Review

Suggested Word Length: 1,000-1,100

A review of a new book that is coming out on benefit-cost analysis. The review should give the reader a good sense of the content and appropriate audience for the book (i.e., level of difficulty), and how the book fits into the literature. Conversational observations may make the review more engaging and easier to read.

Commentary or Benefit-Cost Perspective on Current Events

Suggested Word Length: 800-1000

An economist's view on a timely (or timeless) issue that relates to benefit-cost analysis--theory, applications, methods, tools. Technical / analytical pieces are preferred to pieces that take an advocacy approach to policies.

Opinion Piece

Suggested Word Length: 800-1000

This type of piece is more of an op-ed, than commentary. While analytical in focus, the author is taking a position on an economic or policy issue. These pieces are more likely to be controversial than any of the others. To ensure that it is still appropriate, the posts should be well-reasoned and acknowledge that there are other views and highlight the key assumptions, facts, or values that lead them to advocate for their position.

Practical Perspectives / Teachable Moments

Suggested Word Length: around 500 words

Piece would deal with issues of interest to working professionals or practitioners. Could be informative and thoughtful pieces providing practical or professional observations or advice. Another possibility is a discussion of "teachable moments"—events in the policy world that provide fodder for classroom discussions.

Work in Progress

Suggested Word Length: 600-900

Piece should provide context as well as summarize the work and indicate what it does that is new. Be sure to draw connections to benefit-cost analysis. Be sure to identify any interesting linkages to events in the news, articles in the Journal, practical/policy applications, usefulness for those teaching benefit-cost analysis, or other observations.

Interview with a well-known economist

Suggested Word Length: around 1,000 words

Questions would explore the individual's career, their membership or involvement/views of the Society, relevant questions on research, the role of economics in public policy, or other questions relevant to the individual.

Description of Upcoming Event

Suggested Word Length: around 500 words

Short piece highlighting an upcoming event (for the Society or other relevant conference or other event) to raise interest, providing appropriate links and other material to make it easy to attend.

Reporting Back from Relevant Event

Suggested Word Length: 500 to 800 depending on the topic

Reporting back following a conference, webinar, seminar, symposium) or other event relevant to the Society's membership. The blog should introduce and provide some information about the event, but then the author has a lot of leeway as long as the topic is of interest to the membership and the writeup is substantive, informative and interesting.

STYLE GUIDE

In general, you should use rules of grammar and presentation consistent with those in an accepted style guide, such as the Chicago Manual of Style. This document provides additional style guidelines that are specific to “On Balance.”

Formatting

Font: Calibri 11 pt.

Paragraphs: Left justified, one extra line between paragraphs, no indent at start of paragraph, a single space after periods.

Citing Reference Materials

You have a choice between using in-text citations (and generating a corresponding reference list) or hyperlinking directly to reference materials. In general, in-text citations are should be used when referencing books or peer-reviewed journal articles, while hyperlinks are typically used to reference material that is more widely accessible on the internet. Examples of when each option might be appropriate are provided below.

Citation Style for Books or Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Like their customary use in books or journal articles, citations can be used to reference supporting material for a statement in a sentence. This is particularly relevant for blog posts that are analytical or factual in nature. However, for posts reporting on an event and referencing a statement by a speaker, the supporting citation would be the presentation itself; if the presentation materials are accessible, a hyperlink to the materials should be provided as described below.

Since this is an online blog (and not a peer-reviewed journal), please limit the number of citations that you use. While it is important to support your discussion and arguments, please choose your citations judiciously. To avoid overwhelming the reader, use citations for only the most important reference material.

In-text citations should use the following format: (Author Year). All materials cited using in-text citations should be identified in a corresponding item in a reference list at the end of your submission, *regardless of whether referenced materials are open access*. The reference list should be in alphabetical order by author’s last name and formatted in accordance with an accepted style guide of choice. Page numbers are not needed.

Use of Hyperlinks

In many cases, it will be more appropriate, and easier for the reader, if you use hyperlinks instead of in-text citations. You should use hyperlinks only to directly link to *Open Access* material, including:

- organizational websites
- *Federal Register* notices, rulemakings, legislation, etc.
- conference websites or a presentation (if posted and generally accessible) for a conference
- blog posts on the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis website or another website
- *Open Access* journal articles (especially articles published in the *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*—which we strive to promote)
- governmental publications or data websites
- reports by non-governmental organizations
- newspaper or magazine articles

To avoid overwhelming the reader, limit the number of hyperlinks you provide. For each link provided, it should be clear *why* the link is there. For example:

- If you are linking from an organization’s name, it will be obvious why you provided a hyperlink to the organization’s website.

- If you write, “A report from the NYU School of Law found that. . .,” you should provide a hyperlink directly to the specific report, rather than including it in a reference list.
- If you state that “Data obtained on the number of regulations reviewed by OIRA suggest that...,” you should provide a hyperlink to the appropriate data source.
- If an issue has been addressed in various sources to which you want to direct the reader (but not necessarily provide an in-text citation in support of your specific argument or statement), you can write: “The pros and cons of these issues have been explored in several recent articles by xxx and yyy” and link to those articles.

We do not typically link to bios for people who are referenced in the article. However, to provide the reader with additional context, the following information should be provided after list the name of a referenced individual: their current affiliation (in parentheses), and their expertise / connections (as appropriate) to the blog post. For example:

- Sophia Shmalensee (Cornell University Department of Economics), a former OIRA Administrator under President Wilson, stated that...

How to Insert Hyperlinks into the Document

Do not insert the hyperlinks directly into the document. Instead, use a comment bubble to provide the hyperlink and indicate where in the text it should be inserted.

Use of Footnotes

Do not use footnotes. No-ways, no-how, zip. *Just no.*

Use of Acronyms

Use acronyms sparingly. Acronyms can be included (in parentheses) for well-known organizations and government agencies. However, acronyms should be avoided for benefit-cost analysis or cost-benefit analysis, and preferably should also not be used for the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis or the Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis—unless doing so makes the text unwieldy.

If a term or organizational name is only used once, there is no need to include the acronym, since it will not be needed.

When referring to the discipline of benefit-cost analysis or cost-benefit analysis, do so without capitalizing the first letter of each word unless it is part of a title.

Use of Cost-Benefit Analysis versus Benefit-Cost Analysis

Authors from countries or organizations that typically use the term “cost-benefit analysis” instead of “benefit-cost analysis” may continue to do so in their submission to “On Balance.”

Housekeeping

Do adopt American English spelling and grammar, and use the Oxford (serial) commas.