

## Appendix C: General form of Strategy Analysis Summary (SAS) papers

Each of these papers is an opportunity for students to demonstrate critical thinking skills in writing and application of strategic theories. Papers should be arguments, based on concise, useful, and accurate analysis and supported by data. The audience is any strategic manager interested in the firm or industry. The best papers are based on clear arguments and that provide insights that readers feel are useful even if they disagree with the overall argument.

### General format of papers

**Maximum length of 2 pages**, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1” margins all around. Author’s full name and day and time of class at the top of every page, and multiple pages stapled.

The first sentence should state overall conclusion of the entire paper: If you are arguing yes or no about an action, say it up front. If arguing for taking a specific action, say it up front. Don’t make the reader wait for your insight.

Paragraphs should all begin with an argument, then support it: Do not start with summary facts; start with the argument, then bring in the facts and thinking that supports it.

If a topic involves a strategic advantage you must consider what competitors will and can do: All strategic advantage is relative to competitors and their reactions, not absolute.

Explicitly use theories from class in your paper: Theories from class are both more powerful and accurate than the “common sense” myths that surround strategic management, but also are more authoritative in convincing your audience. Without using theoretical analysis, a paper will likely be (and certainly will appear to be) a set of shallow personal opinions.

### What to avoid

- DO NOT include additional research on the case, or related theories in the analysis. **Doing so will reduce the paper’s grade by at least one-half letter grade.** Why? Because the [hindsight bias](#) and [influence of authority](#) of outside researchers are very powerful and unhelpful forces affecting how everyone analyzes events. People will fail to be as insightful when faced with “obvious” opinions that come from knowing the future or the recommendations of experts. Useful practice in analysis requires sticking with analysis of the case facts where the future is unknown, and experts don’t have easy answers.
- DO NOT summarize the case or theories: The audience has read the book and case.
- Do not provide a “balanced view” and argue both sides of an issue: Ultimately strategy is about action and you can’t do both do and not do an action.
- It is best practice to not turn in the first draft or fail to use spellcheck. Good writing is re-writing.