

Strategies for Writing and Publishing Journal Articles

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Objectives for Today's Presentation

- 3 **Review the various components of a biomedical journal article**
- 3 **Present a few tips on clear and effective scientific writing**
- 3 **Present guidelines for ethical publishing**
- 3 **Discuss rejection and revision**

Essential Elements of a Manuscript

- 3 Based on what was known and unknown, why did you do the study?

Introduction

- 3 How did you do the study?

Methods

- 3 What did you find?

Results

- 3 What does it mean in the context of the existing body of knowledge?

Discussion

For In-Depth Information on Manuscript Management

Strategies for Writing and Publishing Journal Articles

Continuing Medical Education

<https://cme.wustl.edu/>

CME Online

Launch date will be announced.

Writing the Paper

Basic Scientific Writing Tips

3 When writing a biomedical manuscript:

Tell your story.

Write logically (use transitions).

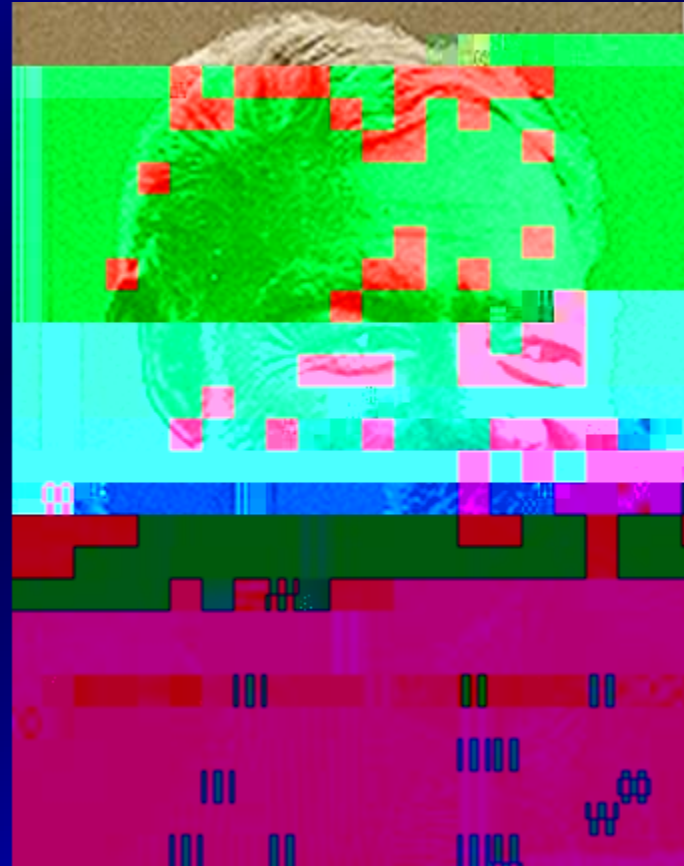
Be clear and concise.

Simplify your writing.

Simplify Your Writing

Sentences are clearest, most forceful, and easiest to understand if they are simple and direct.

Biomedical Writing With William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway



Faulkner: The Artist



“Loving all of it even while he had to hate some of it because he knows now that you don’t love because: you love despite; not for the virtues, but despite the faults.”

Hemingway: The Journalist



**“All you have to do is
write one true sentence.**

**Write the truest sentence
that you know.”**

Hemingway: The Journalist



**When challenged to
write a full story in six
words, he responded:
“For Sale: baby shoes,
never worn.”**

--Courtesy of Jay Piccirillo, MD

Building Your Manuscript

3 **Word Choice**

3 **Sentence Structure**

3

Word Choice

- 3 Use common words.
- 3 Define technical words early, both in the abstract and in the main body of the proposal.
- 3 Never assume that your reader will understand “jargon.”
- 3 Always spell out acronyms at first mention.
- 3 Don't trust spell check.
- 3 Proofread, proofread, proofread!

Word Choice

Use the word that conveys your meaning most accurately. When deciding between two such words, choose the shorter word:

Approximately

About

Commence

Begin

Finalize

Finish

Prioritize

Rank

Terminate

End

Utilize

Use

Word Choice Problems

Ability vs. *Capacity*

Ability is the mental or physical power to do something, or the skill in doing it.

Capacity is the full amount that something can hold, contain, or receive.

Sentence Structure

- 3 Write short sentences like Hemingway, not long sentences like Faulkner.
- 3 Put parallel ideas in parallel form.
- 3 Simplify by using “active voice.”
- 3 Use strong verbs, not nouns.
- 3 Tighten your writing.

Put parallel ideas in parallel form.

To give a comfortable rhythm to your writing, use the same pattern for ideas that have the same logical function. Balance elements of the sentence: nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, adverbs with adverbs, and prepositions with prepositions.

Instead of: “Tissue samples were weighed, then frozen, and analyses were performed.”

Write: “Tissue samples were weighed, frozen, and analyzed.”

Simplify by using active voice.

To simplify, use active, not passive, voice:

“The new drug **caused** a decrease in heart rate.”

Revised:

“The new drug **decreased** heart rate.”

Use strong verbs, not nouns.

Make an adjustment

Adjust

Make a judgment

Judge

Make a decision

Decide

Perform an investigation

Investigate

Make a referral

Refer

Reach a conclusion

Conclude

Tighten your writing.

At the present time...

Now

Due to the fact that...

Because

It may be that...

Perhaps

In the event that...

If

Prior to the start of...

Before

On two separate occasions...

Twice

Ethics in Publishing

Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Publishing

- 3 **Intellectual honesty**
- 3 **Accurate assignment of credit**
- 3 **Fairness in peer review**
- 3 **Collegiality in scientific and clinical interactions**
- 3 **Transparency in conflicts of interest**
- 3 **Protection of human and animal subjects**

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Ethical Responsibilities of an Author

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Ethics in Publishing

3 Duplicate Publication

Definition: Submission of or publication of the same paper or substantial parts of a paper in more than one place.

How to Avoid: Do not submit the paper or parts of that paper to more than one journal at a time. Wait until your paper is rejected or withdraw it before submitting elsewhere.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Ethics in Publishing

3 Redundant Publication

Definition: Using text or data in a new paper from a paper that is already published. Also called auto- or self-plagiarism.

How to Avoid: Do not include material from a previous study in a new one, even for statistical analysis. Repeat control groups as needed.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Ethics in Publishing

3 Falsification and Fabrication

Definition: Changing or making up data in a manuscript, usually to improve the results of the experiment. Includes digital manipulation of images (blots, micrographs, etc.)

How to Avoid: Present the exact results obtained. Do not withhold data that don't fit your hypothesis. Don't try to beautify images with Photoshop—any manipulations must apply to the whole image.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Unacceptable Figure Manipulation

- 3 Improper editing
- 3 Improper grouping
- 3 Improper adjustment

Authors should not:

Move

Remove

Introduce

Obscure

Enhance

any specific feature within a image. Images should appear as captured in the lab or clinical environment.

Ethics in Publishing

3 Human/Animal Welfare Problems

Definition: Treatment of experimental subjects that does not conform with accepted standards and journal policy.

How to Avoid: Obtain prospective IRB/IACUC approval for the study protocol. Do not deviate from the protocol. Obtain approval for amendments as needed before altering the protocol.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Ethics in Publishing

3 Conflict of Interest

Definition: Real or perceived conflict due to employment, consulting, or investment in entities with an interest in the outcome of the research.

How to Avoid: Disclose all potential conflicts to the Editor of the journal and within the manuscript itself.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Ethics in Publishing

3 Authorship Disputes

Definition: Disputes arising from the addition, deletion, or change of order of authors.

How to Avoid: Agree on authorship before writing begins, preferably at the start of the study. Ensure that all authors meet criteria for authorship. Sign publisher authorship forms.

Courtesy of the American Physiological Society

Dealing with Rejection/Revision

Major Reasons for Rejection

3 **Inappropriate for the journal**

Do your homework

3 **Merely confirmatory/incremental**

Avoid Least Publishable Unit (LPUs)

3 **Describes poorly-designed or inconclusive studies**

Focus on your hypothesis

3 **Poorly written**

Great science in an ugly package can still be rejected

Revisions

- 3 If your paper is returned for revision, you are in good company
- 3 It's OK to get mad, but don't act on it!
- 3 Try to understand what the reviewers are really saying

Responding to Reviewers

- 3 **Complete additional experiments if needed**
- 3 **Address all comments in a point-by-point fashion**
 - Resist the temptation to prepare an impassioned response to points with which you disagree**
 - Stand firm (diplomatically) if that is truly the right thing to do**
- 3 **Sincerely thank the editor and reviewers for helping you to improve your work**
 - They have invested a lot of time, mostly on a voluntary basis**
- 3 **Ask a neutral colleague to review your response**

More Tips for Success

Tips for Success

- 3 **Know the journal, its editor, and why you submitted your paper there**
- 3 **Read the instructions for authors**
- 3 **Avoid careless spelling, grammar, formatting mistakes**
- 3 **Make sure references are appropriate and accurate**
 - Remember who your reviewers might be!**
- 3 **Ensure appropriate file format, including figures**
 - Is the on-line version the one you want the reviewers to see?**
- 3 **Confirm receipt of submission**

Tips for Success

**Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts
Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing
and Editing for Biomedical Publication**

<http://www.icmje.org/>

For More Information

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Room 116, Medical Library**

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- 3 **Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers (Birgitta Malmfors, Phil Garnsworthy, Michael Grossman)**
- 3 **Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers (Mimi Zeiger)**