HOW TO WRITE A GOOD MANUSCRIPT
Ready?

Am I ready to write a paper?

• What was my original hypothesis?
• Do my data answer the question?
• Are the data sufficient to support the conclusion?
• Are the experiments reproducible?
• Are my findings novel?
Get set…

What type of article shall I write?

- Full Length
  - substantial and complete
- Letter or Short Communication
  - short and quick
  - early communication of significant findings

Choose journal

- Where have most of my references been published?
- Does my study fit the scope of the journal?
- Read the Author Guidelines!
Manuscript structure

1. Title and abstract
2. Introduction
3. Material and Methods*
4. Results
5. Discussion and Conclusion
6. References
7. Tables, figures and figure legends

Order of Preparation

1. Tables, figures and figure legends
2. Material and Methods
3. Results
4. Discussion and Conclusion
5. Introduction
6. Title and abstract
7. References

* In some journals Material and Methods are placed just before the References
Figures

What is the best way to present my data?

• Table
  • Keep it simple!
  • If it is not central to the main narrative, place it in the supplementary material
  • Give it a title

• Graph or chart
  • Needs to be clear and self-explanatory
  • Don’t forget to label axes!
  • Don’t forget the error bars
  • If the result can be explained in one simple sentence, then a graph is probably not needed

• Image
  • Good resolution (check Author Guidelines)
  • Label appropriately
  • Provide details in the figure legends

CONTROLS ARE IMPORTANT!
Material and Methods

Your work needs to be reproducible

- Wording has to be clear and specific, quantities exact
- Use approved nomenclature (see Author Guidelines)
- Specify the source of the material (producer, batch, model, etc.)
- If a procedure is well established, the reference to the original method is sufficient
Results

Follow a logical flow

- Experiments need to be consequential
- The order is not necessarily the same as the one you performed your experiments in
- Organize your results in paragraphs with subheadings
- Do not keep data back for future papers – All relevant data should be included to support the conclusions
- Large datasets can be deposited in specialized databases and the accession number provided in the results
- Don’t forget the statistics!
Discussion

Interpret your findings in light of previously published data

- What is the step forward?
- How does the data support (or oppose) the initial hypothesis?
- Do not ignore published data that is in disagreement with your findings!
  - How can I explain the discrepancy?
  - Why do I think I’m right?
- Keep speculation to a minimum and label it as such
- Name the future steps required to answer new questions raised by the findings
• The **Conclusion** can either be the final paragraph of the Discussion, or a separate section (when Results and Discussion are presented together)
• Make global and specific conclusions in relation to the objectives stated in the last paragraph of the Introduction
Introduction

Present the context or background of the study

• Provide a thorough overview of the present knowledge closely related to the problem that will be addressed
  • Make sure all the key words and concepts used in the following paragraphs are properly introduced here
• Indicate the need for more investigation regarding the problem
  • Why did I investigate this?
  • Why is it interesting?
• In the last paragraph specify the objectives

The last paragraph of the introduction is as important as the conclusion!
Title Page

What makes a good title?

- short and incisive
- specific but not too technical (to attract broad and appropriate readership)
- states the result rather than describing the context
  - E.g. “Flavonoid-X increases Drosophila lifespan” vs “Effects of flavonoid-X on Drosophila”
- Should include the main keywords (search engine optimization)

Authorship

- Authors should have contributed substantially to the work
- An author takes credit for a paper but must also bear responsibility for its contents
- The first authors are listed in order of degree of contribution
- The last author is the supervisor or PI
- Some journals ask to specify author contributions
Abstract

What makes a good abstract?

• Should stand alone
  • Briefly summarize the background, the results and the advance in knowledge
• Should include all essential keywords to increase the article’s searchability on PubMed
• Should not contain uncommon abbreviations, measurements or references
References

• Use an appropriate software to format your references
  • Endnote
  • Mendeley
• Follow the journal format
• Cite primary literature whenever possible
• Cite articles published in peer-reviewed international journals
• Avoid citing unpublished work (not even “submitted but not yet accepted”)

Acknowledgements

• A space for thanking collaborators who do not appear in the author list (e.g. have provided reagents, constructive criticism, etc)
• Mention grants and funding agencies here
Polishing up

Proofread your manuscript
• Check grammar and spelling
• Improve style
• Sacrifice fancy expressions for the sake of clearness
• No plagiarism!
• Run it by a native speaker or use a professional English language polishing service

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