

INT'L WRITING AND STYLE FORMAT



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序

董会庆教授是西北农林科技大学外语系主任,曾留学美国北卡罗来纳大学研究生院,并在驻外使馆工作多年。他长期担任多种自然科学类学术期刊英文编辑及国际学术会议翻译工作,对国际论文写作规范进行了广泛研究,积累了丰富资料。董会庆教授在教学和管理工作之余,辛勤笔耕,撰写了《国际论文规范》一书,这对提高我国学术论文在国际学术期刊的刊用量,促进国内外学术交流具有重要作用。

随着科技全球化的发展,发表国际论文的数量和质量愈来愈成为衡量一个科学家、一个单位乃至一个国家学术水平的重要标准之一。更多的科教人员也渴望在国际高水平学术期刊发表自己的研究成果和学术见解,以得到国际同行的评议和交流,但由于缺乏对国际论文写作规范的了解,往往难以刊用。《国际论文规范》简洁而明晰地阐述了英文科技论文的写作技巧和诸多国际高水平学术刊物刊用论文的规范要求,介绍了由“美国心理协会”和“现代语言协会”提出的APA和MLA两类学术论文格式规范。深信该书的付梓出版,能够对大家有所帮助。

孙武子

2005年10月

INTRODUCTION

A style format provides the writing rules for particular academic discipline. When you follow those rules, you can produce a work whose form is recognizable by other readers in the discipline. When all members of a discipline write professional articles in a common form, they can more easily understand one another. The style format helps keep the members of a discipline in touch with one another.

Choose a style format according to your purpose. If you are writing an article for an academic journal, select the style used by that journal. If you are writing for a professor, ask her/his preference. Generally speaking, if you are writing behavioral, scientific, or social scientific research, use *APA*. If you are writing artistic or humanistic work, use *MLA*. *Chicago* style is also one of the alternatives, though it sounds a bit conventional. Keep in mind that these are not the only two or three formats available; you may select the style that best fits your preferences and those of your reader, and of course, of the utmost importance, take the publisher's preferences as the priority.

Following the format will cause you to present your paper in a consistent and readable form. Each format will include information such as how wide your margins should be, how to present tables or illustrations, how to cite research within the text of the paper, what to document, how to abbreviate, and whether to write numbers as words or figures. The format will explain how and when to make title pages and how to write headings within your paper. For example, if you have several sections in the main body of your paper, you

may want to put a heading before each section. The style format will tell you whether to capitalize that heading or whether to center it. When you use a style format, your writing style will be consistent throughout your paper; it also will be understandable to the reader because your reader also will be a scholar who knows these standards.

Remember that your style format fundamentally is used to locate rules about how to present the form and shape of your paper; however, some style formats include sections about how to approach the subject matter of your research paper. Those sections often review how to select a topic, use the library, compile a bibliography, and take notes. Although these sections are not exhaustive, they may provide enough guidance for you to get started on your paper. That is also the reason why part of this book deals in detail with the fundamentals of writing style.

Usually, you will not use the format to create the ideas in your paper; you will use it to determine form. Because you concern yourself with form after you generate content, you may not consult the style format until you reach the final drafts of your paper. If you try to make your rough drafts conform to the style format, you may slow down your creative process and interrupt your good thinking. If you are writing your first research paper and never have used a style format before, wait until you reach the last stages of writing before you consult one for rules of form. At that point you will be ready to discover how to write headings, present numbers, create bibliographies, etc..

If, however, you are writing a thesis or a long research paper, you may want to consult the format earlier so you do not have to rewrite parts of your paper. For example, if you consult the format for bibliographic form, you can record your sources correctly as you go. When you finish your paper, you will not have to rewrite your bibliography (which can be several pages long) or go

back to the library to search for bibliographic information you did not retrieve when you had the source. Graduate students will do themselves a favor by using a single style format consistently throughout their graduate work so they can become familiar with the style requirements before they begin their thesis work.

All in all, all scholarly journals have their own special standards set to meet for style formats, but the basics are always there retaining a uniform predominance.

I. Scholarly Journals

The purpose of scholarly journals is to share findings, ideas, and discoveries within a community of specialized scholars. It is in these journals that the cutting edge discoveries, ideas, and developments of every field are first published. Many of these journals are peer-reviewed, meaning that every article that is deemed a possible candidate for publication is read by two or three recognized scholars in the field, who critique not only the writing but the importance and usefulness of the information presented.

Typically, these journals are only open to people doing original work in the field. Within each discipline there is a hierarchy of journals, with the top journals only publishing the most important and exciting work, and/or only publishing work produced by recognized scholars and/or laboratories, and the smaller journals typically publishing good but less groundbreaking work. Guidelines for publication in these journals are listed in one issue a year; a potential writer for one of these publications is recommended to be familiar and comfortable with the typical level of discourse, tone, style, subjects, etc..

As a researcher, it is essential to keep in mind that you are trying to persuade your audience of the importance and validity of your experiment. After

all, it is only after a hypothesis has been proven or disproved numerous times by many different researchers that the information gained will become part of the scientific dogma. This is only possible if experimental results are written up in such a way that the information is comprehensible and convincing.

II. Journal Articles

1. Organization

Scientific information in journal articles is normally divided into the following sections: Title, Authors, Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion and References. Most journals are peer-reviewed. That means that they are sent out to at least two other researchers in the field who are well informed on the topic. The researchers carefully read the manuscript to determine if Materials and Methods are well explained and conclusions of data are reasonable.

They may ask the author for further information or to perform additional experiments before the article is accepted for publication.

2. How to read journal articles

Normally the title, authors and abstract are read first. Then the introduction, results and discussion are read. Finally the methods are read by those who intend to repeat the work or who are unfamiliar with the procedures used. If the title and abstract pique your interest, you will read the introduction to get enough background to understand the rationale for the experiment. You would then skip to the results. This section describes what the author(s) have done. The text should accurately describe the data in the figures and tables. You need to read the results to decide if the data support all statements. In the discussion, the authors will try to convince you of the significance of their da-

ta, but you must weigh their evidence and decide whether you agree.

3. What you find in each section of a journal article

Title

The title of a paper is brief but clearly and sufficiently reflects its contents. The title may state the subject of the article or it may give the article's major conclusion. The title is important, for it is the first thing the reader sees, and it helps the readers decide if the article is something they wish to read. Also literature databases use key words from titles to list papers, so a good title will help readers find articles relevant to their interests.

Authors

Authors are not a section of a paper but over time authors doing important work are recognized. Literature databases can be searched by author to locate all articles written by a particular author. Normally the individual who did the majority of the work is listed first, and the last author is the principal investigator of the laboratory. The principal investigator is the person in charge of procuring funds and directing the laboratory.

Abstract

The abstract should represent a greatly condensed version of the entire paper. It must allow the reader to understand the essence of the authors' research without having to refer to the article. It presents the rationale for the study, reports key results, and points out their significance. Specific details of data are given, but methodology is not described in detail unless it is unique. An abstract should be brief (less than 250 words). The abstract allows the reader to decide if they wish to read the entire paper. Literature databases often supply abstracts online.

Introduction

The introduction includes a brief summary of the relevant published literature describing previous research conducted on the problem. The background material, even though it may seem self evident, is referenced. It explains the rationale and justification for the research and usually ends with a statement of the hypothesis that the research was designed to test.

Materials and Methods

The materials and methods section is written in enough detail to allow another investigator to duplicate the experiments; however, it is written as text and not in the form of directions. New methods are described completely and sources of unique chemicals and equipment are stated. Standard methodologies (e. g. , Gram stain, plate count) are not explained. Methods completely described in previous papers are cited.

Results

Results are presented in a sequence that logically supports or rejects the hypothesis. Illustrations and tables that accurately reflect the data are included in results, but they are still referred to in the text. Illustrations and tables are accompanied by a title and an informative legend. Extensive interpretation of data is not given in this section.

Discussion

The discussion interprets the meaning of the results and draws conclusions from the data. The authors should show how their observations relate to each other to form a cohesive story. It should address any discrepancies between these results and other papers. The potential implications of the work should be stated.

References

References cited in the text are listed in a style dictated by the journal.

4. Language features of journal article

Voice

Most scientific writing is written in an objective manner, with little drama or flair. Typically the results are being showcased, not the writing. The purpose of scientific writing is not to entertain; the purpose is to inform. The writing should be simple and easy to understand. The style of the writing itself is relatively formal — the use of slang and the overuse of contractions should be avoided. Because science and scientific research is supposed to be presented objectively, scientific writing has traditionally been written in a passive voice. The pronouns “I”, “We”, and “They” were typically not used. For example, instead of writing “I used MacConkey agar to isolate the bacterium *Escherichia coli*”, it is more customary to write, “MacConkey agar was used to isolate the bacterium *Escherichia coli*.” This is still the rule for Material and Methods, but recently the convention is changing and the active voice is more commonly used in journal articles today.

Tense

Most of scientific writing is in the past tense, although there are exceptions. Everything that the researcher has performed is described in past tense. This includes the summary of the experiment performed (the abstract), description of the materials and methods used to perform the experiment, and the results obtained from the experiment. The present tense is reserved for the researcher’s conclusions about the experimental results, conclusions of previous researchers, and any facts that are generally accepted by the scientific

field. These are found in the introduction and parts of the discussion.

Although most writing guides stipulate that the tense should be coordinated within a sentence or paragraph, there are exceptions. According to the *American Society for Microbiology (ASM) 2001 Instructions to Authors* (found in the beginning of every journal of *ASM*), there are some instances where it is acceptable to vary the tense in a single sentence.

The examples given by *ASM* as acceptable include:

“White (3) *demonstrated* that XYZ cells grow at pH 6.8,”

“Figure 2 *shows* that ABC cells failed to grow at room temperature,”

“Air was *removed* from the chamber and the mice died, which proves that mice require air,”

“The values for the ABC cells *are* statistically significant, indicating that the drug inhibited...”

III. General Checklist for Style Format

This checklist is designed for scholars to have a quick review of the essential criteria after their research papers are accomplished. It tries to summarize briefly (using as few words as possible) the main points in the corresponding outline item of the more detailed document. If scholars think of the English writing style format as something indispensable to their professional career, they should go through this book chapter by chapter. For briefness of this checklist, anything unsure by using it may be worked out in consulting the following two concise formats: *APA* or *MLA* at the end of this book.

General Topics

A. Typing—Microsoft Word document

1. Must be typed or printed on a computer.
2. Double space throughout.

3. Use 1 inch margins.
4. Use normal paragraphs (5 space indent) in body of manuscript.
5. Use 12 point font (10 characters/inch).
6. Single space after a sentence terminator.
7. Capitalize 1st letter following colon if clause is a complete sentence.
8. Text is left aligned (& not justified).
9. Do not hyphenate words at end of sentences.
10. Staple or clip manuscript.

B. Writing in General

1. Must use complete sentences.
2. 1st sentence of a paragraph must be independent.
3. Avoid slang.
4. Do not use contractions.
5. Spell check & look up when necessary.
6. Proofread.

C. Style Details in General

1. When in doubt, check *APA* or *MLA*.
2. Write for submission to a scientific journal.
3. Model other *APA* or *MLA* journal articles.
4. Avoid using personal pronouns.
5. Avoid sexist language.
6. Avoid using empty words.
7. Past tense in the abstract/intro/method, present in results/discussion.
8. Try to read as if naive before handing in.

D. Abbreviations

1. When abbreviating, spell out the first time.
2. Do not use too many abbreviations.

3. Latin abbreviations are used only in parenthetical material (except for et al.).
4. Do not use E & S as abbreviations for experimenter & subject.
5. Common abbreviations do not use periods.

E. Numbers

1. All measurement is metric.
2. 0-9 are spelled out (with exceptions). 10+ are written as numbers.
3. Capitalize nouns followed by numerals.
4. In abstract, use digits for all numbers (except when beginning a sentence).
5. Spell out any number when it is the 1st thing in a sentence.
6. Be consistent with number formats (e. g. , decimals).

F. Citations in the Text

1. If you use someone's words/ideas, you must cite them.
2. There are numerous ways to cite formally.
3. First time reference is cited, spell out all authors.
4. If citation is in parentheses use ampersand for "and".
5. Multiple parenthetical citations are placed alphabetically.
6. Second hand citations should be clear.

G. Quotations

1. You must give page numbers for direct quotes.
2. 3-4 quotes in 10 page paper are upper limit.
3. Display quotation of >40 words as free-standing block.

Research Reports

H. Title Page

1. Format manuscript page header & page number.
- X •

2. Running head is <50 characters.
3. Title should summarize main idea in 10–12 words.
4. Format title, author's names & institutional affiliation.

I. Abstract

1. Abstract is on Page 2.
2. Format word Abstract.
3. Type as a single paragraph in block format.
4. Purpose is to provide a brief & comprehensive summary.
5. Should be accurate, self-contained, concise (<120 words), & specific.
6. Use digits for all numbers except when beginning a sentence.
7. Avoid citing references in abstract.
8. Paraphrase rather than quoting.
9. Use active rather than passive voice (but without personal pronouns).
10. Use past tense for procedures & present tense for results.
11. It is best to write this section last.

J. Introduction

1. Word Introduction.
2. Begins on Page 3.
3. Start by retyping the title. Do not type word Introduction.
4. Purpose is to tell the reader why study was performed.
5. Starts out broad & becomes specific.
6. Might include any hypotheses & rationale for them.
7. Final paragraph states explicitly states why study was performed.
8. Contains a minimum of 4 paragraphs.

K. Methods

1. Word Method.
2. Purpose is to describe in detail how study was performed.

3. Avoid unnecessary details. Similar to “empty word” problem.
4. Experiments divide methods into: subjects, apparatus, design, and procedure.
5. Surveys do not include a design section.

Subjects/Participants

6. Word Subjects/Participants.
7. “Subjects” or “Participants” depending on animals or humans.
8. Indicate who, how many, & how selected. With humans informed consent?
9. Include any relevant details.

Apparatus

10. Word Apparatus.
11. Describe materials used & how functioned.
12. Must give model #, company, & state (as 2-letter abbreviation).
13. Must give dimensions (& perhaps other details).
14. Standard equipment (office equipment) is mentioned without details.
15. Do not describe procedures in this section.

Design

16. Word Design.
17. Describe design & spell out (types & levels of) IVs & DVs.
18. Describe how subjects assigned to groups.
19. Describe any control procedures used.

Procedure

20. Word Procedure.
21. Carefully summarize each step.
22. Indicate what a typical test, trial, or session involved.

23. Describe any phases or instructions given.
24. When referring to groups, use descriptive labels.

L. Results

1. Word Results.
2. Statistics Site. Write this section after creating tables/figures.
3. Briefly state main findings in words, then go into details.
4. Describe, then analyze.
5. Means are presented with 1 more digit of accuracy than raw data.
6. With nominal or ordinal data, give %s rather than frequencies.
7. General format of inferential statistic: Statistic (df)=value, p=value.
8. When possible, include some statistical estimate of effect size.
9. Emphasize meaning.
10. Do not “discuss”.
11. Assume reader has working knowledge of statistics.
12. If subheadings employed, introduce & organize by meaning.
13. Do not provide raw data, unless a single subject approach is required.
14. Avoid the word “prove”.
15. Be careful with using wording that implies causality.

M. Discussion

1. Word Discussion.
2. Purpose is to evaluate & interpret results.
3. Start off with a brief, non-technical summary of results.
4. Discuss the implications of the results.
5. Discuss how results relate to literature cited in introduction.
6. Could mention any limitations of study & suggestions for future.
7. Need concluding paragraph that summarizes conclusions drawn.
8. Should contain minimum of 3 paragraphs.

N. References

1. Start on a new page. Center word References.
2. Any citations made must be presented & vice versa, or a bibliography, or references.
3. Tells the reader where they can find the citations.
4. Alphabetized by last name of first author.
5. Use hanging indent for each reference.
6. For each author, give the last name, first initial, middle initial.
7. Separate multiple authors with commas & last author with ampersand.
8. Year follows author (in parentheses & followed by a period).
9. Journal reference.
10. Book reference.
11. Example reference section.

O. Other Sections

1. Includes: tables, figure captions, & figures. Each on a separate page.
2. Tables & figure captions have manuscript page header. Figures do not.
3. Tables & figures should be able to stand alone.
4. Data points should not be presented redundantly.
5. Tables & figures should contain lots of data.
6. Tables & figures may present other info besides results.
7. Tables or figures must be introduced. Reader should also be told what to see.

Tables

8. Tables do not contain vertical lines.
9. Format of table number & title.
10. Recommend table feature of word processor for formatting.