Writing and Publishing Journal Articles: Ways to Decrease Stress and Increase Success

Barbara Gastel, MD, MPH
Professor, Texas A&M University
INASP Associate—AuthorAID Project

Sri Lanka Medical Association, 6 March 2015

Welcome!

Plans

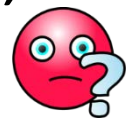
- 20 tips for increasing success and decreasing stress when writing and publishing journal articles (micro version of AuthorAID workshop)
- Open discussion (can ask questions orally or in writing)
- Availability after the session and by email
- Handout provided

AUTHORAID

Writing and Publishing Journal Articles

20 Tips for Increasing Success and Decreasing Stress

1. Write to communicate, not to impress.

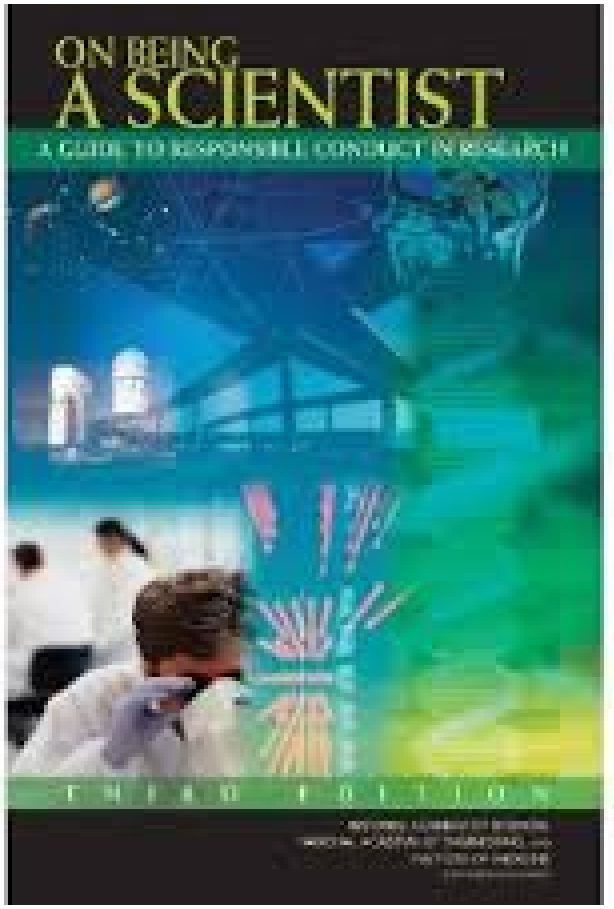
- Desired impression: The material is clear, important, and interesting.
- Undesirable impression: You have a big vocabulary, and the subject matter is confusing. 
- Good writing: largely “invisible writing”
- Remember: Many readers know relatively little English, and most readers are busy.

2. Start thinking about publication when you plan your research.

- Is the research carefully designed?
- Have you planned the statistical analysis, if any?
- Will you have all the information needed to write a publishable paper?

3. Know the ethics.

- Authenticity
- Accuracy
- Originality
- Credit
- Ethical treatment of humans and animals
- Disclosure of conflicts of interest



4. Take full advantage of library resources.

- Important for background knowledge
- Important for context
- Include openly accessible and other articles
- A resource: librarians

5. Make key decisions early.

- Author list
- Journal
- Other

ICMJE Criteria for Authorship

- From the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
- Updated August 2013
- See http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html.

“The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

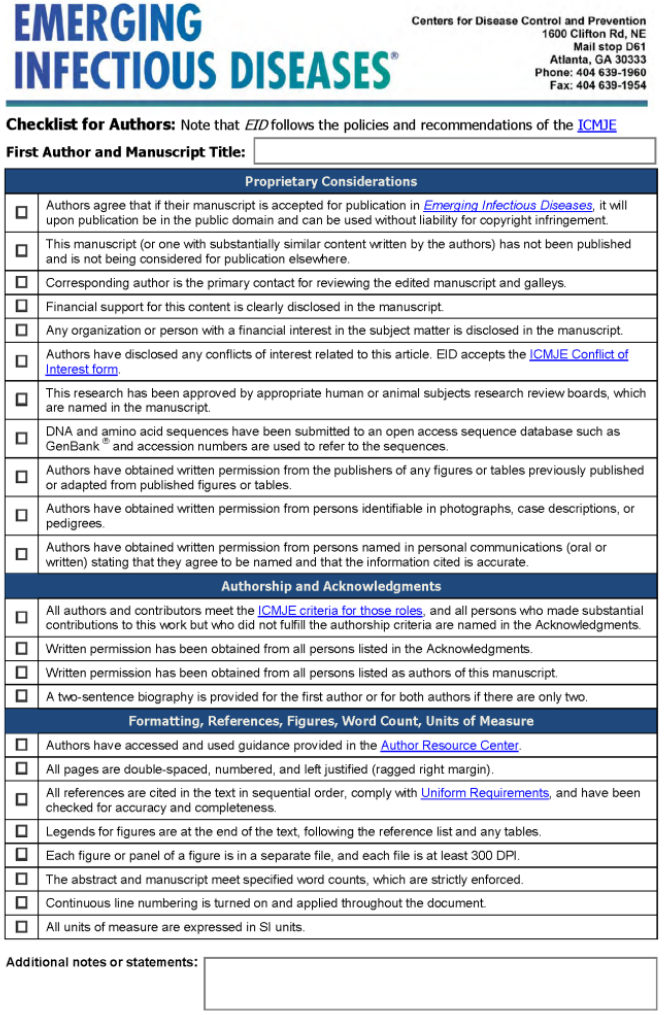
- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.”

Something Fairly New: ORCID

- Stands for Open Researcher and Contributor ID
- Launched in late 2012
- “ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher”
- ORCID identifiers can aid in tracking authors of papers, grants, etc
- See http://orcid.org/

6. Follow the journal's instructions to authors.

- Surprisingly, this advice is often ignored.
- Extremely important
- Most journals post instructions on their websites.



EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES®

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd, NE
Mail stop D61
Atlanta, GA 30333
Phone: 404 639-1960
Fax: 404 639-1954

Checklist for Authors: Note that *EID* follows the policies and recommendations of the ICMJE

First Author and Manuscript Title:

	Proprietary Considerations
☐	Authors agree that if their manuscript is accepted for publication in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, it will upon publication be in the public domain and can be used without liability for copyright infringement.
☐	This manuscript (or one with substantially similar content written by the authors) has not been published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.
☐	Corresponding author is the primary contact for reviewing the edited manuscript and galleys.
☐	Financial support for this content is clearly disclosed in the manuscript.
☐	Any organization or person with a financial interest in the subject matter is disclosed in the manuscript.
☐	Authors have disclosed any conflicts of interest related to this article. EID accepts the ICMJE Conflict of Interest form.
☐	This research has been approved by appropriate human or animal subjects research review boards, which are named in the manuscript.
☐	DNA and amino acid sequences have been submitted to an open access sequence database such as GenBank ® and accession numbers are used to refer to the sequences.
☐	Authors have obtained written permission from the publishers of any figures or tables previously published or adapted from published figures or tables.
☐	Authors have obtained written permission from persons identifiable in photographs, case descriptions, or pedigrees.
☐	Authors have obtained written permission from persons named in personal communications (oral or written) stating that they agree to be named and that the information cited is accurate.
	Authorship and Acknowledgments
☐	All authors and contributors meet the ICMJE criteria for those roles, and all persons who made substantial contributions to this work but who did not fulfill the authorship criteria are named in the Acknowledgments.
☐	Written permission has been obtained from all persons listed in the Acknowledgments.
☐	Written permission has been obtained from all persons listed as authors of this manuscript.
☐	A two-sentence biography is provided for the first author or for both authors if there are only two.
	Formatting, References, Figures, Word Count, Units of Measure
☐	Authors have accessed and used guidance provided in the Author Resource Center.
☐	All pages are double-spaced, numbered, and left justified (ragged right margin).
☐	All references are cited in the text in sequential order, comply with Uniform Requirements, and have been checked for accuracy and completeness.
☐	Legends for figures are at the end of the text, following the reference list and any tables.
☐	Each figure or panel of a figure is in a separate file, and each file is at least 300 DPI.
☐	The abstract and manuscript meet specified word counts, which are strictly enforced.
☐	Continuous line numbering is turned on and applied throughout the document.
☐	All units of measure are expressed in SI units.

Additional notes or statements:

Instructions to Authors in the Health Sciences (http://mulford.utoledo.edu/instr/)

7. Use good models.

- Good scientific writing: largely a matter of imitation
- Use articles in your target journal as models.
- Some things to notice (if not specified in the instructions): length, number of figures and tables, use of headings, reference format, technical level, style, other

8. Organize the information carefully.

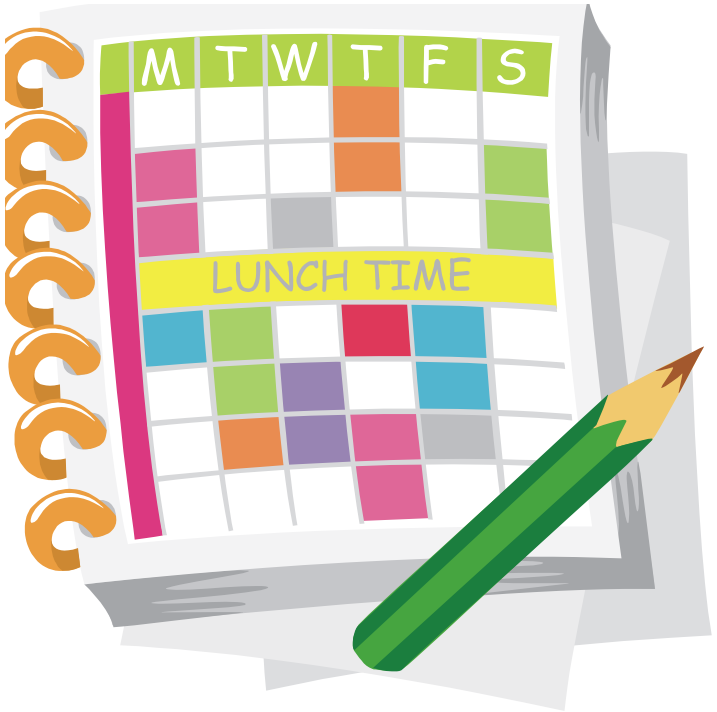
- Robert A. Day: “The preparation of a scientific paper has less to do with literary skill than with *organization.*”
- Time invested in organization can save much time later.
- Usual organization of a scientific paper: IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion)
- A common structure of case reports: Introduction, Case Description, Discussion

9. Use oral & poster presentations to help shape your paper.

- Helps define focus
- Encourages you to analyze the work
- Helps in organizing content
- Provides opportunity for feedback

10. Set aside blocks of time for writing.

- Reserve times for writing.
- Consider having regularly scheduled times to write.
- Choose times you tend to function best.



11. Keep your audience in mind.

- Some possible readerships:
  - Researchers
  - Clinicians (general physicians, specialists, subspecialists)
  - Other health professionals
  - Medical students
  - Others: policymakers, members of public, et al
- Gear the content to the readers' knowledge.
- Gear the content to the readers' interests.

12. Start with whatever part you find easiest.

When writing a paper, what part would you find easiest to start with?

- Introduction?
- Methods?
- Results?
- Discussion?
- Something else?

13. Check for proper English and for readability.

- Check grammar, punctuation, and usage.
- Make sure that acronyms are defined.
- Pay attention to items often difficult for non-native users of English:
  - Preposition use
  - Verb tense
  - Use of articles such as *the*
  - Other

Writing Readably: Using Simpler Words

- attempt →
- currently →
- demonstrate →
- fundamental →
- numerous →
- subsequently →
- utilize →

Writing Readably: Deleting Needless Words

- in the field of cardiology
- green in color
- is a very rare event
- to show whether or not it works
- of an efficient nature
- count the number of cells
- completely destroy

Writing Readably: Condensing Wordy Phrases

- at high speed →
- at some future time →
- for this reason →
- in most instances →
- in the event that →
- the majority of →
- is able to →

Writing Readably: Using Verbs, Not Nouns Made from Them

- have effects on →
- make contributions →
- produce relief of →
- provide help to →
- delivered a lecture →
- There is a wide variation in mortality. →
- It is my belief that →

14. Make sure the text and tables/ figures don’t overlap too much.

- A common problem: The text repeats too much information from the tables and figures.
- In general, the text should present only the main message(s) and most important content from each table and figure.
- (Do remember to mention each table and figure.)

15. Get feedback from others before submitting your paper.

- “Pre-submission peer review”
- Can be helpful to get feedback from
  - Another specialist in your research area
  - Someone in your general field
  - Someone outside your field

16. Revise, revise, revise.

- In revising, make good use of feedback from others.
- Also, set aside the paper for a while, so you can view it with a fresh eye.
- A story: editor of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*

17. Understand how journals work, and interact with them accordingly.

- Initial screening
- Peer review
- Editor's decision
- Revision
- Copyediting
- Review of proofs
- Other

THE CEYLON
MEDICAL JOURNAL

Established 1847

Volume 54, No. 1, March 2009

CONTENTS

Leading article
1 Elder abuse – a wake up call
P Palasthanes, PNS Edirisinghe, S Williams

Papers
4 Incidental occult carcinomas in total thyroidectomy for benign diseases of the thyroid
Rani Fernando, D S G Ratnatunga, L Kaviyakarasuka
6 Trans rectal ultrasound guided prostate biopsies: A single centre experience in Sri Lanka
R D S Lokuhetty, H D Wijesinghe, D T Wanyaniya, U C Ranaweerasinghe, N D Perera
10 Prevalence and correlates of physical and emotional abuse among late adolescents
Wanjiku Perera, Thulo Ratnayake, P L Anjanamala, Erandathi Lokuge

Case reports
14 Paracetamol poisoning below toxic level causing liver damage in a healthy adult
W K B Gayan Fernando, P L Anjanamala
16 A case of distal renal tubular acidosis, Southeast Asian ovalocytosis and possible fanconosis
J P Weerasinghe, M Dissanayake
21 Spontaneous bilateral tubal ectopic pregnancy
Jeevan P Marasinghe, George Condous, W I Amarasinghe

Research letters
23 Prevalence of chronic kidney disease in two tertiary care hospitals: high proportion of cases with uncertain aetiology
T N C Athuraliya, D T D J Abeysekera, P H Amerasinghe, P V R Kumarasiri, H Dissanayake
25 A tainted cadaver
P R Ranatunga, J Wasudhamnish
26 Age of onset of menarche and secondary sexual characters in Sri Lankan girls of two different regions
V P Wickramasinghe, T U M De Silva, H H Pallebedda, A N K De Silva, L Rajapakse, Sisirath P Lamabadusuriya
28 Possible familial gestational spontaneous ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome due to mutation of FSH receptors (FSHCHR)
D L W Dassayake, K Lingamallan, P E Hettiarachchi, D N Ranathunga, D Wannakusuriya
29 Screening newborns for congenital hypothyroidism
Manjula Hettiarachchi, Chandrani Liyanage, Nazeera Liyanarachchi

Correspondence
31 Suicidal risk assessment and depression
K A L A Kuruppuarachchi, C A Wijesinghe
32 Modified simple percutaneous suprapubic nephrostomy
Senzofia A S Goonewardena

Obituary
100 Professor T W Wickramasuriya
by Sunethra Mukerjee

SRI LANKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY ISSN 0009-0875

18. View peer reviewers and editors as your allies.

- Peer reviewers
  - Not only a source of advice to editors
  - Also a source of mentorship for authors
- Editors
  - Your goal and theirs: to publish an excellent paper
  - Work together to overcome barriers

19. Consider obtaining assistance from a mentor or “author’s editor”.

- Some sources of mentorship
  - One’s current or former professors
  - Senior colleagues
  - AuthorAID mentorship volunteers
  - Other
- “Author’s editors”—editors whose role is to help authors improve materials before submission
  - At editing companies
  - On a freelance basis
  - At some institutions

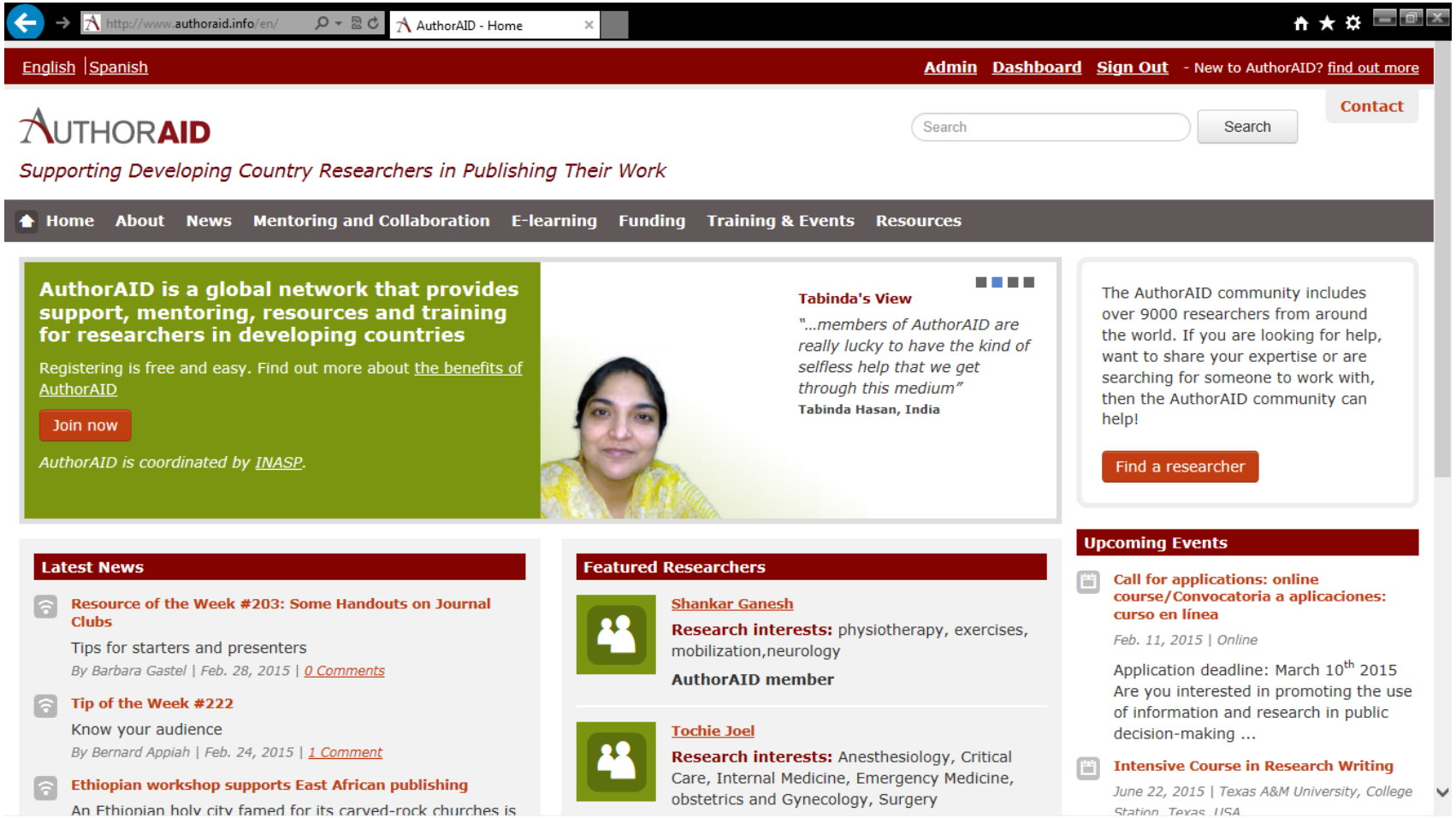
20. Make good use of online resources.

Some Resources

AuthorAID (www.authoraid.info)

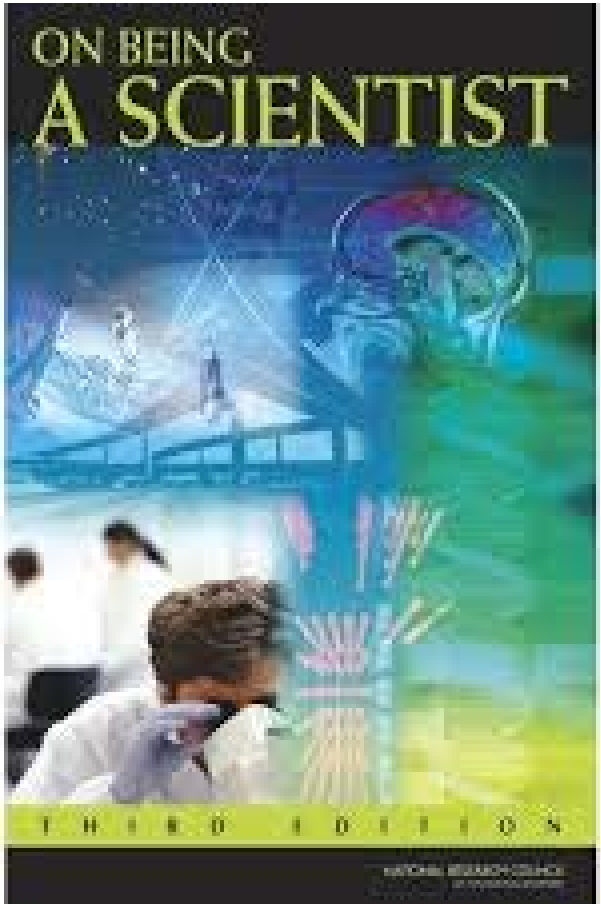
- Project mainly to help authors in developing countries to write about and publish their work
- Includes
  - A resource library
  - An e-mail discussion list
  - A blog
  - And more
- Provides opportunity to obtain mentors
- From INASP (the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications)

AuthorAID (www.authoraid.info)



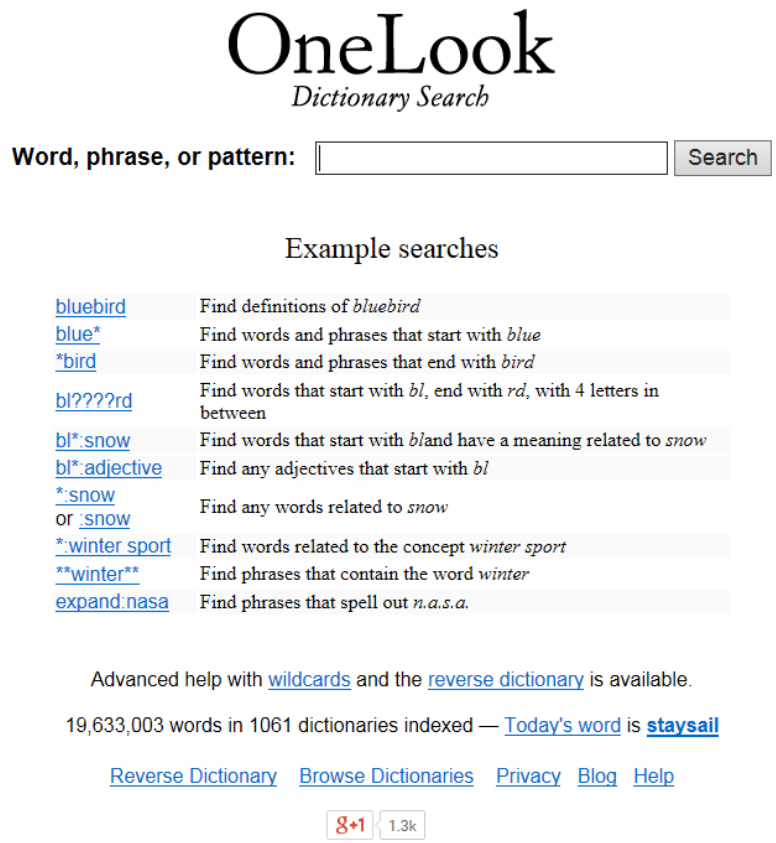
On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research

- www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12192
- Book on ethics in research and publication
- From the US National Academies
- Available online
- Intended mainly for early-career researchers
- Also relevant to scholars other than scientists



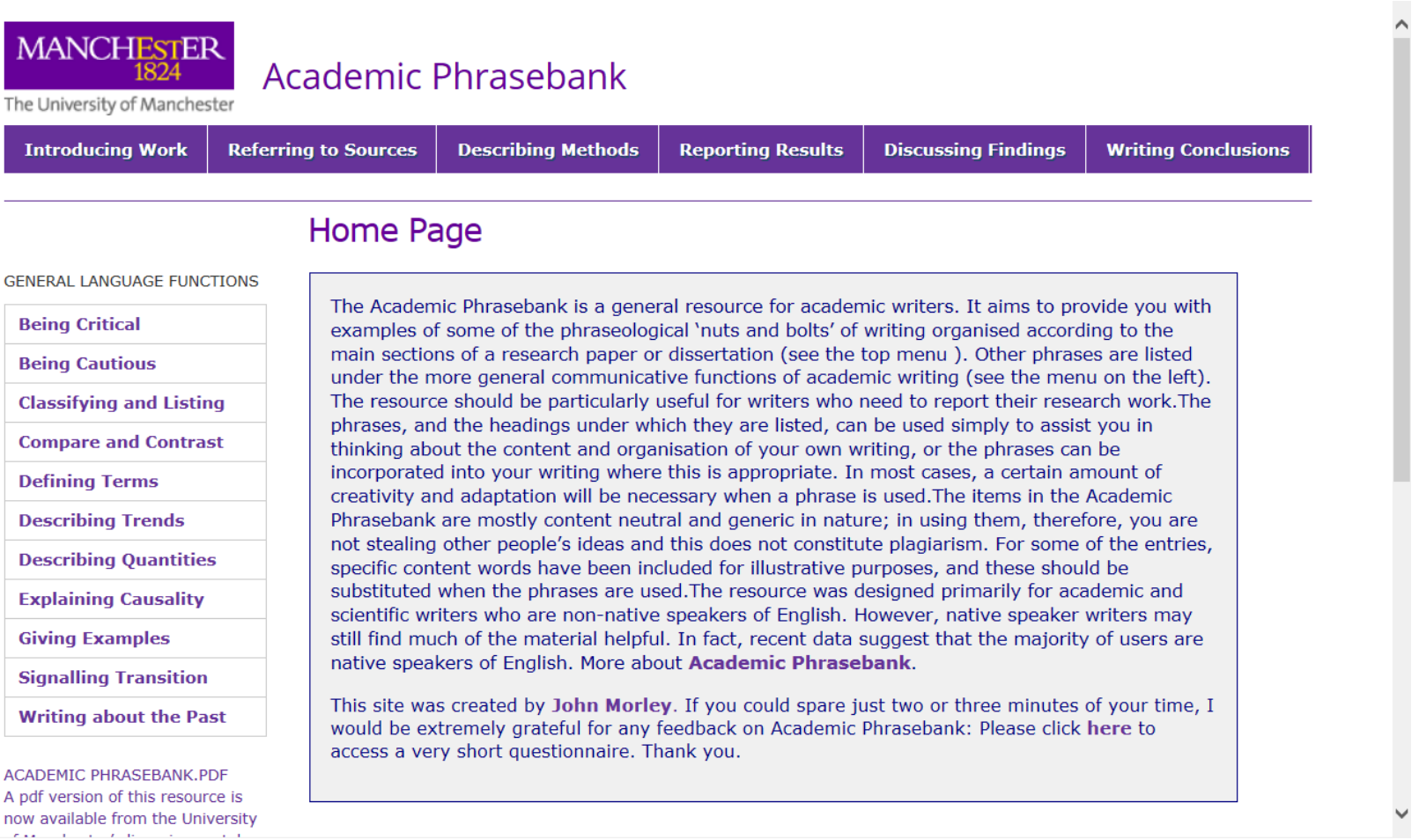
Grammar Girl (grammar.quickanddirtytips.com)

OneLook Dictionary Search (www.onelook.com)



Academic Phrasebank

(www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/)



UsingEnglish.com (www.usingenglish.com)

Designing Conference Posters (colinpurrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign)

HOME PROJECTS TIPS PHOTO GALLERIES ABOUT/CONTACT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This site has futile projects that amuse me, geeky tips, and posts about photography and science.

Search

PROJECTS

- Charles Darwin Has A Posse
- Evolution tattoos
- Portable Charles Darwin
- Prescription for antibiotics
- Preventing plagiarism
- Textbook disclaimers
- We need transparency of school vaccination rates
- Yams versus sweet potatoes

TIPS

- Adding photo creds to talk slides
- Designing conference posters
- Getting rid of camel crickets
- Giving a research talk
- Maintaining a lab notebook
- Protecting gardens from squirrels
- Requesting a recommendation

Designing conference posters

A one-sentence overview of the poster concept

A large-format poster is a big piece of paper (or wall-mounted monitor) that can communicate your research at a conference, and is composed of a short title, an introduction to your burning question, an overview of your novel approach, your amazing results in graphical form, some insightful discussion of aforementioned results, a listing of previously published articles that are important to your research, and some brief acknowledgement of the tremendous assistance and financial support conned from others — if all text is kept to a minimum, a person could fully read your poster in under 5 minutes (really).

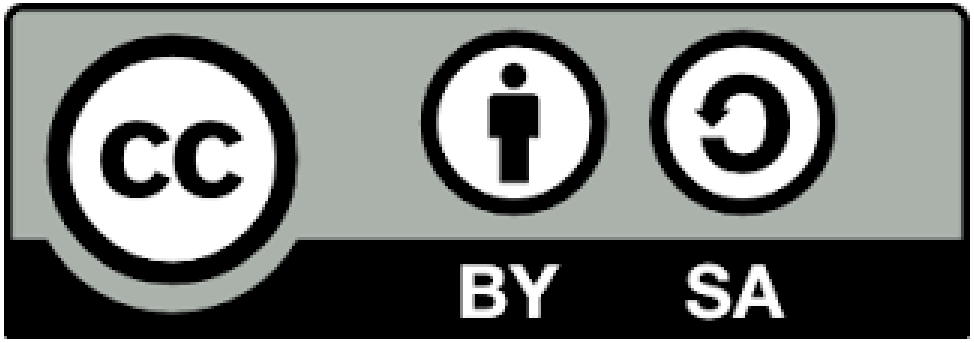
Why a poster? • Motivational advice • Choosing software • Poster templates • Section content • DOs and DON'Ts • Adding pieces of flair • Presenting the poster • Useful internet sites • Useful literature • Printing the poster • Organizing a session • Using this page • Feedback

If you're lazy and really don't want to read this long-winded page, click on the image below for the one-page summary — it's crammed full of tips and tricks. Just try to keep your poster to 800 words or less.

Questions?

Wishing you much success!

Contact: bgastel@cvm.tamu.edu; bgastel@inasp.info



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.