

## Intensive Course in Research Writing

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## Intensive Course in Research Writing: Session 12 (13 July 2016)

### Today

- Presentations by some class members
- Presentation/discussion: other writing for journals
- Presentation/discussion: providing peer review
- Review/discussion: writing an abstract
- Workshop: some favorite essays from journals

### Presentations by Class Members

### Announcements etc

- Reading for tomorrow and Friday
- Writing due the rest of this week
  - Tomorrow: abstract of your paper
  - Friday: compilation of sections of your paper, plus a list of items to do before submitting your paper for publication
- Other

### Some Other Types of Writing for Journals

## “Opinion Pieces” for Journals

- Some types:
  - Letters to the editor
  - Editorials
  - Book reviews
  - Other
- Should present well-informed opinion

## Letters to the Editor

- Used mainly to comment on recently published articles (“post-publication peer review”)
- In some journals, used to report briefly on research
- Sometimes used for other purposes—for example, to make an announcement or share a humorous observation

## Tips—Letters to the Editor

- If a letter is commenting on an article, submit it soon after the article appeared.
- Follow the journal’s instructions about length, number of authors, number of references, allowance of a figure or table, etc.
- Be focused and concise.
- Maintain a polite, professional tone. Avoid sarcasm.

## Editorials

- Generally written or invited by one or more of the editors at the journal
- “Perspective editorials”—provide context for an article in the same issue
- “Persuasive editorials”—argue for a specific point of view
- “Sounding boards”—similar to editorials but initiated by readers

## Tips—Editorials

- Keep focused.
- Consider the audience, and organize the editorial to be persuasive.

## Book Reviews

- Book review—an article describing and evaluating a book (or some books)
- Some functions of book reviews
  - Helping individuals and libraries to identify suitable books
  - Acquainting readers with highlights of books that they might not read
  - Providing feedback to authors and publishers

### Tips—Preparing to Write a Book Review

- If you have a conflict of interest, do not review the book.
- In general, read the book thoroughly.
- If the book isn't suitable to read cover to cover (for example, if it's an encyclopedia), sample it in a thoughtful way.
- Take notes as you read.

### Examples of Questions to Consider Addressing in a Book Review

- What is the goal of the book?
- Of what does the book consist?
- What is the background of the author(s)?
- What are the strengths of the book?
- What are the limitations?
- How does the book compare with related books?
- Who would find the book useful?

### [Example of a Book Review](#)

### Some Additional Types of Articles for Some Journals

- Case reports or case studies
- Methods articles
- News articles
- Essays
- What else?

### Being an Effective Peer Reviewer

### Overview

- Functions of peer review
- Deciding whether to review a submission
- Reviewing papers: general suggestions
- Reviewing papers: section-by-section advice
- Reviewing proposals
- Reviewing book manuscripts etc
- Providing informal peer review

## Functions of Peer Review

- To aid in deciding whether to accept an item
  - Scientific paper
  - Grant proposal
  - Book proposal or book manuscript
  - Other
- To help the author(s) improve the item

## Discussion Question

- How can peer reviewing benefit the peer reviewer?

## Some Benefits for the Peer Reviewer

- Staying current in the field
- Maintaining critical skills
- Enhancing one's curriculum vitae
- Potentially becoming an editorial board member or editor
- In some cases, receiving an honorarium or other compensation
- Having a sense of service

[A Blog Post on Rewards  
of Peer Reviewing](#)

## Deciding Whether to Review an Item

- Do you have time to complete the review adequately by the deadline?
- Do you have sufficient expertise in the subject matter?
- Are you free of conflicts of interest?

## Typical Parts of a Peer Review of a Journal Submission

- Confidential comments for the editor(s)
- Comments to share with the author(s)

## A Reminder

An item being peer reviewed is confidential. Do not discuss it with anyone. Do not show it to anyone without the editor's permission.

## Reviewing Scientific Papers: General Advice

- Don't tell the authors whether you consider the paper publishable.
- Begin the comments for the authors by noting general strengths and limitations. Then provide section-by-section comments.
- Specify by page, paragraph, and line the items that you comment on.

## Reviewing Scientific Papers: General Advice (cont)

- Don't bother correcting the writing in detail.
- Remember: The authors are human beings, and they probably have worked hard on the paper. Be tactful. Remember to note strengths.
- Use the review as a chance to educate the authors.

## Some General Questions to Consider

- Is the research question important?
- Is the research original?
- Were appropriate methods used?
- Are the results credible?
- Are the conclusions consistent with the findings?
- Is the paper clearly written?
- Does all the content seem logical?

## Reviewing a Scientific Paper: Some Section-by-Section Questions

*Note: This part of the presentation also serves as a review of material on writing journal articles.*

## The Title

- Does the title accurately reflect the content of the paper?
- Is the title clear and concise?

### The Abstract

- Is the abstract informative enough?
- Is the content of the abstract consistent with that of the paper?

### The Introduction

- Does the introduction provide sufficient background?
- Does the introduction clearly identify the research question or hypothesis?

### The Methods

- Are the methods appropriate to the question?
- Are methods described in sufficient detail? If not, what is missing?

### The Results

- Are the results described in appropriate detail?
- Do the results seem credible?
- Is the text consistent with any tables and figures?
- Are all tables and figures needed?
- Could the tables and figures be improved? If so, how?

### The Discussion

- Is the discussion clear and focused?
- Are the conclusions consistent with the findings?
- Does the discussion adequately address items such as the following?
  - Limitations of the study
  - Anomalies in the findings
  - Relationships to previous research
  - Theoretical implications
  - Practical applications

### The References

- Do all the references seem appropriate to include?
- Should any additional items be cited?
- Do the references appear to be accurate?

### Discussion Question

- In reviewing a grant proposal, what are some items to consider?

### Reviewing Grant Proposals: Some Items to Consider

- Importance of the proposed work
- Consistency of the proposed work with the granting agency's goals
- Suitability of the methods
- Qualifications of the staff
- Adequacy of the facilities
- Appropriateness of the budget

### Discussion Question

- In peer reviewing a book proposal, what are some items to consider?

### Reviewing Book Proposals: Some Items to Consider

- Importance or interest of the topic
- Adequacy of coverage of the topic
- Organization
- Writing quality
- Qualifications of the author
- Competition from other books

### Discussion Question

- What advice do you have for providing informal peer review (for example, as has been done in this course)?

### Providing Informal Peer Review: A Few Points

- Find out what level of review is being sought.
- Consider serving a "criticism sandwich": praise, then criticism, then praise.
- Express criticisms as perceptions, not facts.
- Criticize the work, not the person.
- Suggest improvements.

## Writing an Abstract

(and providing keywords)

## The Abstract

First to Be Read  
but Last to Be Revised

## The Abstract

- As noted, briefly summarizes the paper
- Gives editors and peer reviewers their first impression of the paper
- Tends to be widely read
- Should be organized like the paper (for example, in sort of a mini-IMRAD format)
- Some journals have structured abstracts (with standardized headings)

## The Abstract (cont)

- Depending on the kind of paper and the journal, may be informative (summarizing the content of the paper) or just indicative (stating the topics included)
- Should be carefully revised before the paper is submitted
- Be sure the content is consistent with that in the body of the paper.

## Resources

- [“Writing the Scientific Abstract”](#) (presentation by Susan Aiello)
- [“Writing Abstracts”](#) (presentation by Barbara Gastel)
- Note: For more resources, please search the [AuthorAID Resource Library](#), using the terms “abstract” and “abstracts.”

## Keywords

- Requested by some journals
- Indicate the main topics of the article
- Appear below the abstract
- Can aid in indexing and searching
- Commonly should come from standardized vocabulary lists in your field
- Commonly shouldn't be terms in the title



### Mini-Workshop on Keywords

- What, if anything, does your set of instructions to authors say about keywords?
- Does your model paper contain keywords? If so, what do you notice about them?

### A Treat: Some Favorite Essays from Journals