

EFFECTIVE SCIENTIFIC WRITING

Tips to help you write better research papers



Title

Keep the title as concise yet informative as possible (typically 10–20 words).
Be specific rather than broad.



- ✘ *pH regulation in coral*
- ✔ *Effects of light and darkness on pH regulation in three coral species exposed to seawater acidification*

Abstract



The structure should mirror that of a full paper, including an introduction, aims, methods, results and a discussion. Start with a broad introductory statement that is comprehensible to scientists from any discipline. End by clearly stating the importance of your findings.

Introduction

Remember the inverted triangle rule: start broad and narrow in.

The gap in the literature: Provide all the information necessary for the reader to understand your rationale for doing this study.



Figure/Table captions



Use declarative titles that summarise the result or major finding of the data you are presenting in the figure



Figure/table captions should be standalone, i.e., descriptive enough to be understood without having to refer to the main text.

Discussion



Remember the triangle rule: start narrow, summarising your main findings in the first paragraph and then zoom out, putting your findings in the context of previous studies.

Use clear, concise writing

Keep sentences short and simple. Make one point per sentence. Avoid unnecessary repetition.

- ✘ *Zebrafish are often exposed to several environmental pollutants at any one time, and the potential effects induced by exposure to several environmental pollutants on zebrafish health are of great concern.*
- ✔ *Zebrafish are often exposed to several environmental pollutants at any one time, and the potential effects of this on their health are of great concern.*



Use the active voice

- ✘ *The expression of X was determined ... = Passive voice*
- ✔ *We determined the expression of X ... = Active voice*



General writing tips

Keep the subject and verb of the sentence close together

- ✘ *Glucose, which is made during photosynthesis from ... , is a simple sugar.*
- ✔ *Glucose is a simple sugar that is made during photosynthesis from ...*
Avoid long noun strings
- ✘ *Our hospital established a medical services efficiency evaluation index system.*
- ✔ *Our hospital established an index system that evaluated the efficiency of our medical services.*

