

An Introduction to Scientific Writing

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5 and 6 May 2015, 15:00-19:00

General course description:

To become a successful scientist, it is not enough to have a good theoretical background and to learn innovative technical skills. It is equally necessary to develop good writing skills so that you can efficiently communicate your ideas and results. Your articles and proposals need to be attractive and informative so that they get read and cited. This course will provide the essentials on scientific writing style, including the basic elements on how to plan, draft and write the final version of your paper.

Number of hours: 8 hours lectures + 8 hours of home work

Requirements: Good English knowledge. Students are also required to bring their own laptop. Students are asked to write a short scientific essay (1-3 pages) and bring it to the first day of class. At the end of the first day, they will be asked to critically revise this essay, on their own or by groups, following the guidelines and ideas instructed during that day. Students will bring the revised essay on the second day, where the essays will be jointly revised.

Detailed program:

The first day will be dedicated to review the fundamentals of scientific writing. In the second day we will practice these concepts, students will team to analyze samples of their own work.

Part 1: Why becoming a professional writer. Basics of words and sentences. Tense choice: old and new information. Active versus passive voices. Topic, action/challenge and stress. From sentences to paragraphs and sections: the flowing message. Nested arcs. Internal coherence and esthetic consistency. From the first draft to the final manuscript.

Part 2: Targeting your audience. Laying out the elements of the story. Outline your paper: sections, figures and tables. Opening and challenge. Action and resolution.

Recommended reading:

Gopem G, Swan J. 1990. The science of scientific writing. American Scientist.
<https://www.americanscientist.org/issues/pub/the-science-of-scientific-writing>

Marek, P. 2010. The basics of scientific writing in APA style.
http://www.worthpublishers.com/Catalog/uploadedFiles/Content/Worth/Custom_Solutions/Psychology_ForeWords/Marek_Ch04_APAstyle_Color.pdf

Olson L., 2014. Guide to academic and scientific publication. How to get your writing published in scholarly journals. <http://www.proof-reading-service.com/guide/>

Peat J. 2002. Scientific writing. Easy when you know how. BMJ Books.
<http://image.sciencenet.cn/olddata/kexue.com.cn/upload/blog/file/2010/11/2010111022210817101.pdf>

Schimmel J. 2012. Writing science – How to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 221 pp.

Strunk W, White EB. 2000. The elements of style. Fourth Edition, Longman, New York, 105 pp.

Williams JM. 1990. Style: Toward clarity and grace. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 208 pp.

Online resources

- Grammar:

British Council: <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar>

Edu find: <http://www.edufind.com/english-grammar/english-grammar-guide/>

- Dictionary and thesaurus:

Reference web mail: www.dictionary.com, www.thesaurus.com

Oxford English dictionary: www.oed.com

- Other:

The Writing Center, UNC at Chapel Hill: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/>

Butte College TIP Sheets: <http://www.butte.edu/cas/tipsheets/>

Essay Info Writing Guide. http://essayinfo.com/essays/narrative_essay.php