# Formatting guide

This guide describes how to prepare contributions for submission. We recommend you read this in full if you have not previously submitted a contribution to *Nature*. We also recommend that, before submission, you familiarize yourself with *Nature*’s style and content by reading the journal, either in print or online, particularly if you have not submitted to the journal recently.

## General details

Order:

title

Summary

Text

methods

references

supplementary information line

acknowledgements

word count: ~3000 (not inc references and methods)

page count: no more than 5

figure count: ~5

size: up to 30 Mb

file\_format: word or pdf

authorship: If authors regard it as essential to indicate that two or more co-authors are equal in status, they may be identified by an asterisk symbol with the caption ‘These authors contributed equally to this work’ immediately under the address list

## Formats for *Nature* contributions

*Nature*'s main formats for original research are Articles and Letters. In addition, *Nature*publishes other submitted material as detailed below.

**Articles**

Articles are original reports whose conclusions represent a substantial advance in understanding of an important problem and have immediate, far-reaching implications. They do not normally exceed**5 pages** of *Nature*and, as a guideline, allow up to 50 references. (One page of undiluted text is about 1,300 words.)

Articles have a summary, separate from the main text, of up to 150 words, which does not have references, and does not contain numbers, abbreviations, acronyms or measurements unless essential. It is aimed at readers outside the discipline. This summary contains a paragraph (2-3 sentences) of basic-level introduction to the field; a brief account of the background and rationale of the work; a statement of the main conclusions (introduced by the phrase 'Here we show' or its equivalent); and finally, 2-3 sentences putting the main findings into general context so it is clear how the results described in the paper have moved the field forwards.

Articles are typically 3,000 words of text, beginning with up to 500 words of referenced text expanding on the background to the work (some overlap with the summary is acceptable), before proceeding to a concise, focused account of the findings, ending with one or two short paragraphs of discussion.

The text may contain a few short subheadings (not more than six in total) of no more than 40 characters each (less than one line of text in length).

Articles typically have 5 or 6 display items (figures or tables).

Format of Articles and Letters

Contributions should be double-spaced and written in English (spellings as in the [Oxford English Dictionary](http://www.oed.com/))

Contributions should be organized in the sequence: title, text, methods, references, Supplementary Information line (if any), acknowledgements, author contributions, author information (containing data deposition statement, competing interest declaration and corresponding author line), tables, figure legends. In order to facilitate the review process, for initial submissions we encourage authors to incorporate the manuscript text and figures together in a single file (Microsoft Word or PDF, up to 30 MB in size). The figures may be inserted within the text at the appropriate positions or grouped at the end, and each figure legend should be presented together with its figure. Also, please include line numbers within the text.

## Titles

Titles do not exceed two lines in print. This equates to 90 characters (including spaces) for Letters, or 75 characters (including spaces) for Articles. Titles do not normally include numbers, acronyms, abbreviations or punctuation. They should include sufficient detail for indexing purposes but be general enough for readers outside the field to appreciate what the paper is about.

## Text

Articles should fill no more than 5 pages, and Letters no more than 4 pages, of *Nature*. An uninterrupted page of text contains about 1,300 words. A typical Article contains about 3,000 words of text and, additionally, five small display items (figures and/or tables) with brief legends, reference list and methods section if applicable. A typical Letter to*Nature*contains about 1,500 words of text (excluding the first paragraph of Letters, figure legends, reference list and the methods section if applicable) and four small display items (figures and/or tables) with brief legends. A composite figure (with several panels) usually needs to take about half a page, equivalent to about 600 words, in order for all the elements to be visible (see section 5.9 for instructions on sizing figures).

When submitting new or revised manuscripts, authors should state in a cover letter to the editor their rough estimate of the length of their paper in terms of number of pages of *Nature*. Authors of contributions that significantly exceed the limits stated here or specified by the editor will have to shorten their papers before acceptance, inevitably delaying publication.

*Nature*requires authors to specify the contribution made by their co-authors in the end notes of the paper (see section 5.5). If authors regard it as essential to indicate that two or more co-authors are equal in status, they may be identified by an asterisk symbol with the caption ‘These authors contributed equally to this work’ immediately under the address list. If more than three co-authors are equal in status, this should be indicated in the author contributions statement. Present addresses appear immediately below the author list (below the footnote rule at the bottom of the first page) and may be identified by a dagger symbol; all other essential author-related explanation is in the acknowledgements.

Our **preferred format for text i**s Microsoft Word, with the style tags removed.

**TeX/LaTeX**: If you have prepared your paper using TeX/LaTeX, we will need to convert this to Word after acceptance, before your paper in typeset. All textual material of the paper (including references, tables, figure captions, online methods, etc.) should be included as a single .tex file.

We prefer the use of a ‘standard’ font, preferably 12-point Times New Roman. For mathematical symbols, Greek letters and other special characters, use normal text or Symbol font. Word Equation Editor/MathType should be used only for formulae that cannot be produced using normal text or Symbol font.

## Methods

The author should include ‘Methods’ section at the end of the text, following the figure legends. This Methods section will appear in the online PDF and in the full-text (HTML) version of the paper online, but will not appear in the printed issue. The Methods section should be written as concisely as possible but should contain all elements necessary to allow interpretation and replication of the results. As a guideline, Methods sections typically do not exceed 3,000 words. Authors can deposit the step-by-step protocols used in their study to [Protocol Exchange](http://www.nature.com/protocolexchange/), an open resource maintained by Nature Research. Protocols deposited by the authors will be linked to the Online Methods section upon publication.

Detailed descriptions of methods already published should be avoided; a reference number can be provided to save space, with any new addition or variation stated.

The Methods section should be subdivided by short bold headings referring to methods used and we encourage the inclusion of specific subsections for statistics, reagents and animal models. If further references are included in this section, the numbering should continue from the end of the last reference number in the rest of the paper and the list should accompany the additional Methods at the end of the paper.

Please provide a Data Availability statement in the Methods section under “Data Availability”; detailed guidance can be found in our [data availability and data citations policy](https://www.nature.com/documents/nr-data-availability-statements-data-citations.pdf). Certain data types must be deposited in an appropriate public structured data depository (details are available [here](http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/availability.html)), and the accession number(s) provided in the manuscript. Full access is required at publication. Should full access to data be required for peer review, authors must provide it.

The Methods section cannot contain figures or tables (essential display items should be included in the Extended Data).

**References**

References are each numbered, ordered sequentially as they appear in the text, tables, boxes, figure legends, online-only methods, Extended Data tables and Extended Data figure legends.

When cited in the text, reference numbers are superscript, not in brackets unless they are likely to be confused with a superscript number.

Do not use linked fields (produced by EndNote and similar programs). Please use the one-click button provided by EndNote to remove EndNote codes before saving your file.

As a guideline, Articles allow up to 50 references and Letters allow up to 30 references. Only one publication can be listed for each number.

Only articles that have been published or accepted by a named publication, or that have been uploaded to a recognized preprint server (for example, arXiv, bioRxiv), should be in the reference list; papers in preparation should be mentioned in the text with a list of authors (or initials if any of the authors are co-authors of the present contribution).

Published conference abstracts, numbered patents, preprints on recognized servers (preprints of accepted papers in the reference list should be submitted with the manuscript) and research datasets that have been assigned a digital object identifier may be included in reference lists, but text, grant details and acknowledgements may not. (An exception is the highlighted references which we ask authors of Reviews, Perspectives and Insights articles to provide.)

All authors should be included in reference lists unless there are more than five, in which case only the first author should be given, followed by ‘et al.’.

Please follow the style below in the published edition of Nature in preparing reference lists.

* Authors should be listed surname first, followed by a comma and initials of given names.
* **Titles of all cited articles are required**. Titles of articles cited in reference lists should be in upright, not italic text; the first word of the title is capitalized, the title written exactly as it appears in the work cited, ending with a full stop. Book titles are italic with all main words capitalized. Journal titles are italic and abbreviated according to common usage. Volume numbers are bold. The publisher and city of publication are required for books cited. (Refer to published papers in *Nature*for details.)
* Research datasets may be cited in the reference list if they have been assigned digital object identifiers (DOIs) and include authors, title, publisher (repository name), identifier (DOI expressed as a URL). Example: Hao, Z., AghaKouchak, A., Nakhjiri, N. & Farahmand, A. Global Integrated Drought Monitoring and Prediction System (GIDMaPS) data sets. figshare http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.853801 (2014).
* Recognized preprints may be cited in the reference list. Example: Babichev, S. A., Ries, J. & Lvovsky, A. I. Quantum scissors: teleportation of single-mode optical states by means of a nonlocal single photon. Preprint at http://arXiv.org/quant-ph/0208066 (2002).
* References to web-only journals should give authors, article title and journal name as above, followed by URL in full - or DOI if known - and the year of publication in parentheses.
* References to websites should give authors if known, title of cited page, URL in full, and year of posting in parentheses.

## End notes

End notes are brief and follow the reference list.

Papers containing **Supplementary Information** contain a statement after the reference list:

**Supplementary Information** is linked to the online version of the paper at www.nature.com/nature.

**Acknowledgements** should be brief, and should not include thanks to anonymous referees and editors, inessential words, or effusive comments. A person can be thanked for assistance, not “excellent” assistance, or for comments, not “insightful” comments, for example. Acknowledgements can contain grant and contribution numbers.

**Author Contributions:** authors are required to include a statement to specify the contributions of each co-author. The statement can be up to several sentences long, describing the tasks of individual authors referred to by their initials. See the [authorship policy page](http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/authorship.html) for further explanation and examples.

**Author Information:** Authors should include a set of statements at the end of the paper, in the following order:

* A sentence reading “Reprints and permissions information is available at www.nature.com/reprints”.
* [Competing interests](http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/competing.html) statement.
* A sentence reading "Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to XX”, where XX refers to one e-mail address. *Nature*expects this identified author to respond to readers’ enquiries and requests for materials, and to coordinate the handling of any other matters arising from the published contribution, including corrections complaints. The author named as corresponding author is not necessarily the senior author, and publication of this author’s name does not imply seniority. Authors may include more than one e-mail address if essential, in which event *Nature*will communicate with the first-listed address for any post-publication matters arising, and expect that author to coordinate with the other co-authors.