

# Paper writing checklist and advice

This is a checklist for academic paper writing. The document covers text flow, style, figures and table formatting. This document is based upon a number of sources, combining the most actionable items into an easy checklist.

## Text

### Flow

### Language

- [ ] Use active language
- [ ] Avoid long sentences (12 to 17 words max)
- [ ] Simplify your language (dead to the thesaurus)
- [ ] Check for spelling / grammar mistakes
- [ ] One paragraph communicates one important idea
- [ ] Connect paragraphs and ideas in a logical order
- [ ] Use the present tense for facts
- [ ] Use the past tense to describe results
- [ ] Avoid informal language, superlatives
- [ ] Limit the use of conjunctive (connecting) words e.g.:
  - However, In addition, Moreover
- [ ] Repetitive words (but don't substitute by using the thesaurus, re-evaluate the sentences)
- [ ] Don't use spoken abbreviations (e.g. "it's")
- [ ] Single-digit numbers should be spelled out; numbers of two or more digits should be expressed as numerals

### Page Layout

- [ ] 12 point font (preferably a serif font)
- [ ] Double spaced lines
- [ ] Number pages
- [ ] Number lines continuously
- [ ] Avoid “[widows or orphans](#)” or small parts of a larger paragraph remaining at the bottom of a previous page
- [ ] Follow the author layout guide of the journal, most often the schemes:
  - Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion
  - Introduction, Results, Discussion + Conclusion, Methods

## References

- [ ] Check references
- [ ] Check the reference style required

## Figures

- [ ] Figure components are legible in print and on screen
- [ ] All axis are named
- [ ] Figures are colourblind friendly (for colour schemes see: [ColorBrewer](#))
- [ ] The use of symbols and line types is preferred over colour
- [ ] The caption explains the purpose and content of the figure
- [ ] All figures have the same axis orientation
- [ ] Figures with the same (x/y) axis are combined in a single panel
- [ ] Limit the number of pictures in the main manuscript
  - Additional figures can go in the Appendix

## Tables

- [ ] The caption explains the purpose and content of the table
- [ ] Limit the number of tables in the main manuscript
  - Additional tables can go in the Appendix

## References

[Writing a science paper some dos and don'ts](#)

[Experimental Biosciences writing science](#)

[11 steps to structuring a science paper editors will take seriously](#)