Getting your research published: From writing your paper to the peer review process

Speaker: Dr. Lesley Ann Sutton
Institution: Uppsala Universitet
Venue: Scientific writing workshop, CEITEC
Date: 20th September 2016

General structure of a research article

- Title
- Abstract
- Keywords

IMRAD

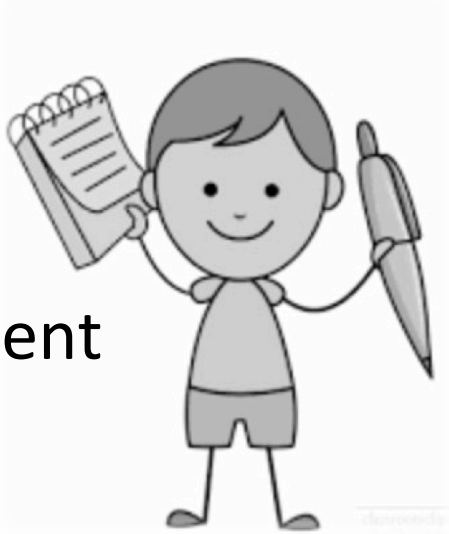
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results and discussion

- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Supplemental material

Read and follow the guide for authors for your target journal

Manuscript title

- Attract attention
- Short and concise: as few words as possible
- Adequately (and interestingly!) describe content
- Informative without being confusing
- Outline the main issue
- Avoid technical jargon and abbreviations



Editors dislike titles that do not represent the subject matter
If the title is not accurate, people may not read your paper

Choosing the right keywords!

What are they?

Why are they important?

- **Labels for a manuscript/article**
- **Used by indexing and abstracting services**
- **Should be specific and directly linked to content**
- **Should only include standard abbreviations**

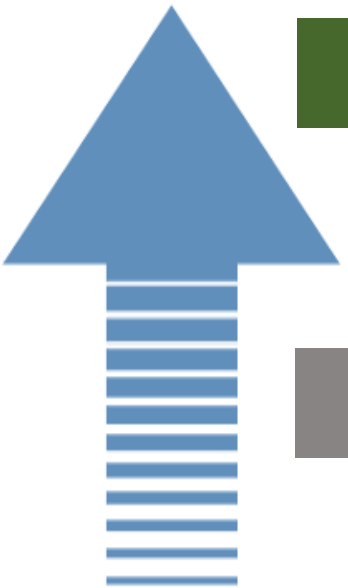
The abstract

- Summarize the study – the idea/problem, method, results and interpretation
- Must be understandable and interesting to make an impact
- Must be accurate and specific
- Keep it as brief and concise as possible

Take the time to write your abstract carefully
Write the abstract last so it accurately reflects your findings

The writing process

Building your paper



Abstract | Keywords | Title

Conclusion | Introduction

Methods | Results | Discussion

Your data – figures and tables

Adapted from Elsevier's college of skills

Motivate your study

- Put your study into context
- What is the problem?
- Identify the solutions and/or limitations
- State what you are trying to achieve
- Perspective consistent with the journal

Write a unique introduction for evey article.
Do not reuse introductions

Methods section

- Describe how the problem was studied
- Include detailed information
- Do not describe previously published procedures
- Identify the materials/cohorts used

Ethical approval

- ✧ Experiments on humans/animals must follow ethical standards
- ✧ Approval of the local ethical committee is required. Should be specified in the manuscript, covering letter, or during submission
- ✧ Editors can make their own decisions regarding ethics

Presenting your results

Simplifying the data

- Data of primary importance
- Be clear and easy to understand
- Highlight the main findings
- Use sub-headings to group similar results together
- Feature unexpected findings
- Provide statistical analysis
- Include illustrations/figures/tables

Interpreting your results

The discussion

- Interpretation of results
- Most important section
- Make the discussion correspond to the results and complement them
- Compare published results with your own

Avoid

- Statements that go beyond what the results can support
- Non-specific expressions
- New terms not already defined or mentioned
- Speculations on possible interpretations

Conclusions

- Be clear
- Provide justification for the work
- Explain how your work advances the field
- Suggest future directions

References

- Don’t over-reference
- Ensure you have read your references
- Avoid excessive self citations
- Conform to the style specified in the Authors guide

Language - why is it important?

- Poor language quality can delay or block publication from being published
- Proper English should be used throughout the manuscript – clear, objective, accurate and concise

The publisher can correct my language?

No! It is the author's responsibility

The aim of science is to make difficult things understandable in a simpler way

Manuscript Language: sentences

- Write direct, short, and factual sentences
- Convey one piece of information per sentence
- Avoid multiple statements in one sentence

Verbs - tenses

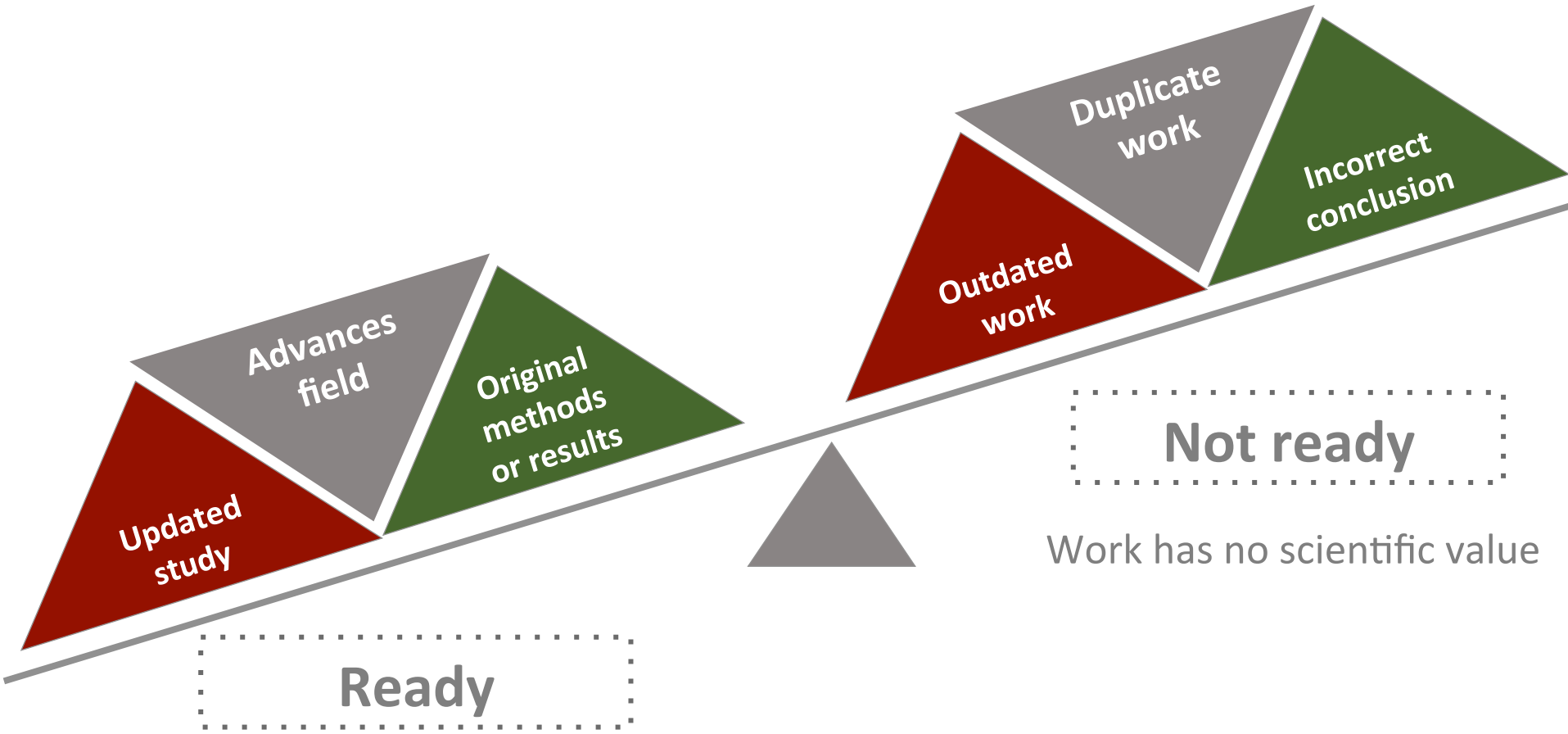
- Past tense: use for experiments conducted and results
- Present tense: use for known facts and hypotheses

Grammar

- Use active voice to shorten sentences
- Avoid contractions and abbreviations
- Eliminate redundant phrases
- Double check unfamiliar words or phrases

Planning your article

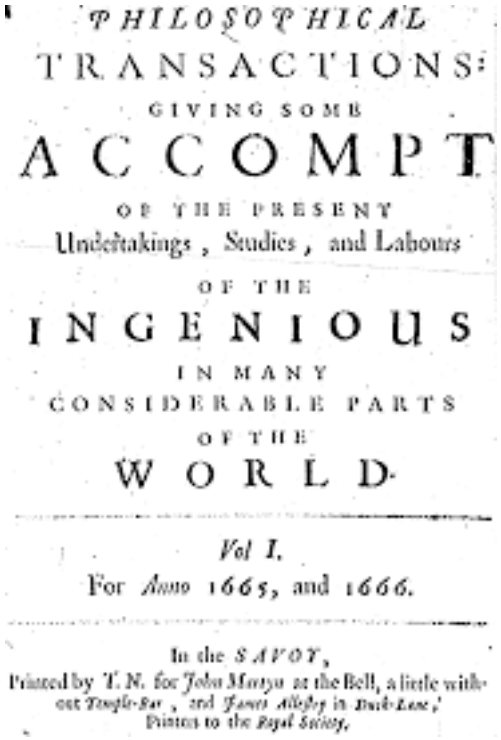
Are you ready to publish?



Adapted from Elsevier's college of skills

Academic publishing
What is peer review?

- Peer review consists of the evaluation of articles by experts in the field
- First used in 1665 by the Royal Society of London
- Reviewers facilitate the editorial process by examining and commenting on manuscripts
- Without peer review there is no control in scientific communication


PHILOSOPHICAL
TRANSACTIONS:
GIVING SOME
ACCOMPT
OF THE PRESENT
Undertakings, Studies, and Labours
OF THE
INGENIOUS
IN MANY
CONSIDERABLE PARTS
OF THE
WORLD.

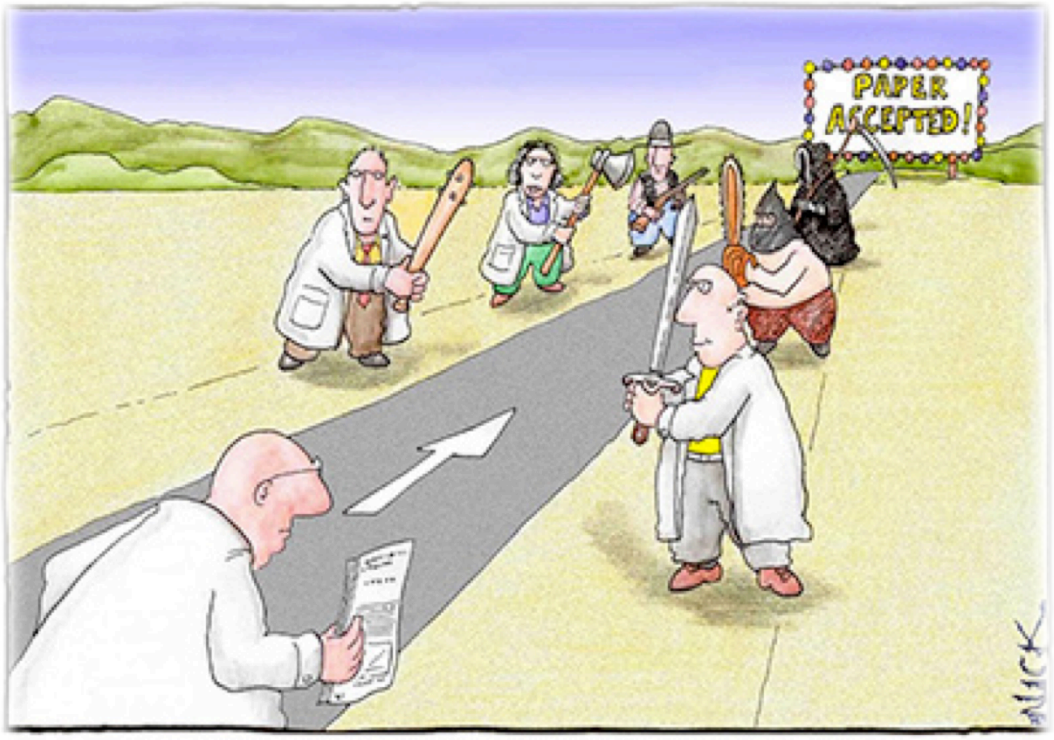
Vol I.
For Anno 1665, and 1666.

In the SAVOY,
Printed by T. N. for John Martyn at the Bell, a little without Temple-Bar, and James Allestry in Duck-Lane,
Printers to the Royal Society.

Reviewers are the backbone of the entire review process

The waiting is over:
Getting your paper back from the editor

- **Rejected without review**
- **Accepted**
- **Minor revisions**
- **Major revisions**
- **Rejected**

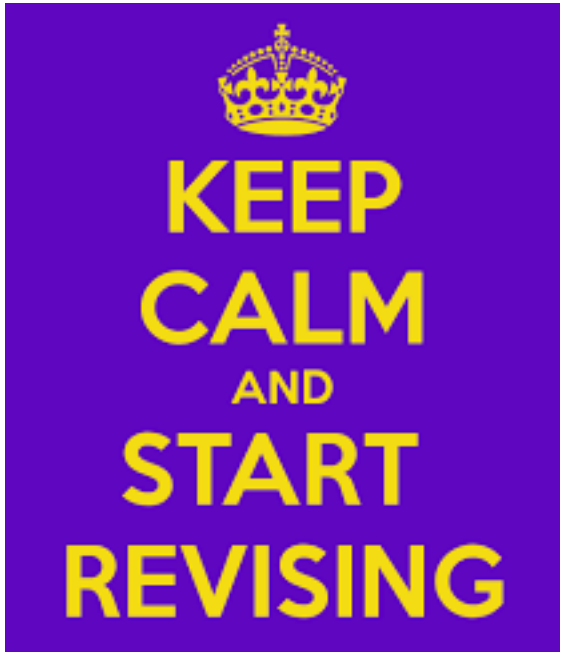


Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as "quite an improvement."

The decision has been made.....

What next?

- Stay calm
- Read the comments
- Re-read the comments
- Have a colleague read the comments
- Take a break
- Simplify the comments



How to respond to comments

- **Deal with the minor comments first**
- **Deal with the major comments next**
- **Begin to draft the cover letter**
- **Golden rules: Be polite**
  Be thorough
  Answer with evidence

Be polite!

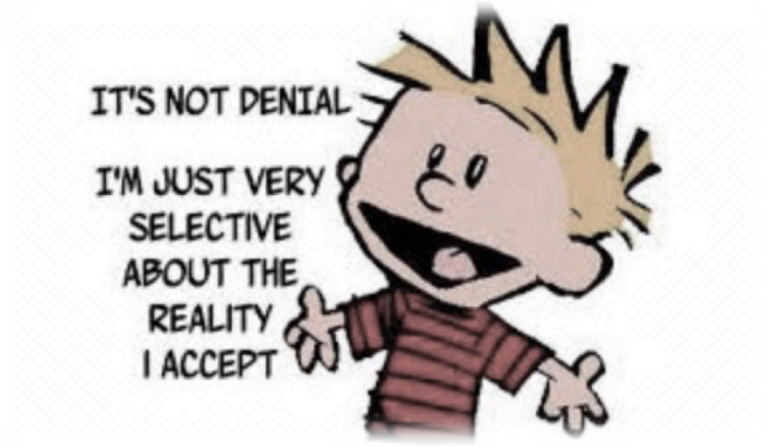
Remember

- Reviewers provide this service for free
- Sets a good atmosphere - creates positivity
- Makes a good impression

- Remain polite even if you disagree with the reviewer
- Avoid harsh language or sweeping statements

Be thorough

- Address every comment
- Do not ignore comments
- Makes a good impression
- Clarity and structure
- Take your time



Answer with evidence

- Especially when disagreeing
- Provide extra data
- Add information to your article

A
C
E

- Answer the query explicitly
- Cite evidence to support your answer
- Explain how the evidence justifies your line of thinking

Response letter

- **Addressed to editor (and reviewers)**
- **Include manuscript title and ID**
- **Summarize**
- **Address disagreements**
- **Be polite!**

The peer review

Potential scenarios

- **Two reviewers disagree**
- **The reviewer is wrong**
- **Comments you don’t understand**
- **Rude reviewers**
- **Resubmit or go elsewhere?**

Two reviewers disagree

- **Common occurrence, but why?**
- **Ask the editor**
- **Do not take this opportunity to play one reviewer against the**

The reviewer is wrong

- How can this happen?
- Not all reviewers are equal

What to do?

- Don’t agree with them
- Use the editor as the judge
- Be polite
- Don’t presume you are correct

Confusing comments

Just ask!

Rude reviewers

- **Sadly, quite common**
- **Is it rudeness?**
- **Take criticism on board**
- **Contact the editor**

Resubmit or go elsewhere?

Never submit the same version of the manuscript elsewhere

Always use the reviewers comments

MASARYK UNIVERSITY

CEITEC

MEDGENET WINNING

Thank you for your attention!

This presentation reflects only the author's view and the Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 692298.

www.medgenet.eu