

Writing papers

A major weakness over the last couple of years has been getting papers out. We need to focus on primary projects and finish them, including getting them published. Here are some guidelines we can use when it is time to write up a piece of work. Of course, you need to be thinking about most of these issues while you are doing experiments too. Importantly, do not assume that I am writing the paper. **You** are writing the paper and I am offering what guidance I can. No matter how much input I have, the depth and quality depend to a large extent on you.

When a study is nearing completion, **do not go on your next project and assume that the work will miraculously appear in print.** This is the time to focus and **finish.** Of course, you can continue other lines of work or start new ones, but you need to **concentrate** on what is needed to get your study **published.**

1. Think clearly about the major **message** of your paper. Just what is that you are trying to tell people-choosing a provisional title may catalyze your thoughts.
2. Choose a target **journal.** This may tell you whether your work is complete, the quality is sufficient and the message of interest. We avoid publishing in weak journals.
3. Make a list of the **key experimental findings** to be described in the paper. These will be the subheadings in the results section. (<=1 page). Key findings illustrate the message (see 1.)

Discuss 1-3 with me before proceeding to 4.

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4. Illustrate the key findings with Figures. Draft the **figures** and their **legends.**

Show me what you have before going to 5. You must be able to support your figures with original data. It is usually necessary to do a few additional experiments during the course of writing. But, if your work clearly needs major additional experimentation-don't write the paper! Do the experiments first!!

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5. Write the **Results** and **Experimental** sections. Make outlines (headings/ topics and subtopics) before you start and discuss with me.

All first authors are expected to do o organize 1-5.

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6. Depending on your level of experience or the nature of the paper, complete or work with me

on the **Introduction** and **Discussion**. Make outlines before you start and discuss with me.

Now we have the **first draft**.

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7. The first draft is refined to give a **next-to-last draft**. There will only be one more version! There are no eighth or ninth versions-life is too short. This means that **all** questions that arise in the first draft must be answered definitively. Remember, the depth and quality of the paper depend on your efforts.

...at this point we are probably not ↓ talking any more...

8. The final draft-your **last chance** to get it right!