

HOW TO WRITE A (GOOD) PAPER

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Considering ELSEVIER standards – as many papers of our community are published in ELSEVIER journals

The article text follows the IMRAD which responds to the questions below:

- **I**ntroduction: What did you/others do? Why did you do it?
- **M**ethods: How did you do it?
- **R**esults: What did you find?
- **A**nd
- **D**iscussion: What does it all mean?

Steps to organizing your manuscript

1. Prepare the figures and tables.
2. Write the Methods.
3. Write up the Results.
4. Write the Discussion. Finalize the Results and Discussion before writing the introduction. This is because, if the discussion is insufficient, how can you objectively demonstrate the scientific significance of your work in the introduction?
5. Write a clear Conclusion.
6. Write a compelling Introduction.
7. Write the Abstract.
8. Compose a concise and descriptive Title.
9. Select Keywords for indexing.
10. Write the Acknowledgements.
11. Write up the References.

For a (long) paper – which needs substantial important results, some 40 pages, double spaced, are needed (including essential data only). Here are some general guidelines:

- **Title:** Short and informative
- **Abstract:** 1 paragraph (<250 words)
- **Introduction:** 1.5-2 pages
- **Methods:** 2-3 pages
- **Results:** 6-8 pages
- **Discussion:** 4-6 pages
- **Conclusion:** 1-2 paragraphs
- **Figures:** 6-8 (one per page)
- **Tables:** 1-3 (one per page)
- **References:** 20-50 papers (2-4 pages)

Remember that "a figure is worth a thousand words."

Illustrations, including figures and tables, are the most efficient way to present your results. Your data are the driving force of the paper, so your illustrations are critical!

How do you decide between presenting your data as tables or figures? Generally, tables give the actual experimental results, while figures are often used for comparisons of experimental results with those of previous works, or with calculated/theoretical values

When presenting your tables and figures, appearances count!

To this end:

- Avoid crowded plots, using only three or four data sets per figure; use well-selected scales.
- Think about appropriate axis label size
- Include clear symbols and data sets that are easy to distinguish.
- Never include long boring tables (e.g., chemical compositions of emulsion systems or lists of species and abundances). You can include them as supplementary material.