

## Suggestions to authors

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Competition for the limited space in *Neurology* is intense, and well-written papers have the best chance of being accepted. Be certain your words express your ideas and message. Write simply and concisely, adhering to Billings' rules<sup>1</sup>: "(1) Have something to say; (2) Say it; (3) Stop as soon as you have said it." Otherwise, the scientific value of your manuscript may be obscured.

The editor's office and publisher will not rewrite poorly written manuscripts. Those not fluent in English should seek help from a colleague or a professional author's editor who does this for a fee.

### Manuscript Preparation

1. Adhere strictly to the format of *Neurology* as described in the Information for Authors of a current issue. Incorrect style irritates reviewers and editors, and the wrong reference style suggests that another journal previously rejected the manuscript.

2. Edit your paper carefully and eliminate errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Good writing requires rewriting.

3. After you type the final draft (especially if someone else types it for you), read it once more before you submit it. Check the accuracy of your references with the original, not secondary, sources. Incorrect citations inconvenience the publisher and are a disservice to the reader.

4. Double-check numerical data. Numbers in the abstract, text, tables, and legends should be consistent.

### Manuscript Organization

5. The Abstract should be substantive and brief. Do not tease; avoid sentences such as, "The implications are summarized." Instead, summarize the implications.

6. Organize your paper to answer the four main questions the reviewers and readers want answered:

- What did you set out to do and why? *Introduction*
- How did you do it? *Methods*
- What did you find? *Results*
- How does it relate to current knowledge? *Discussion*

*Case Reports* substitute for the *Methods* and *Results*. To avoid mixing fact and opinion, keep the *Results* and *Discussion* separate. The *Discussion* should be

clearly reasoned, tightly written, and focused on the implications of the *Results* or the *Case Reports*.

7. Avoid repetition.

- Do not disclose your *Results* in the *Introduction*.
- Do not repeat the *Introduction* in the *Discussion*.
- In the text, do not repeat figure legends, table titles, or the contents of the tables.

8. Use tables sparingly. Presenting a few facts in the text takes less space than a table. In particular, do not use a table for presenting simple word lists.

- Lengthy, complex tables can be filed with the National Auxiliary Publications Service (NAPS). They will assign a file number to be footnoted in the paper and provide the table upon request to any interested reader for a small fee. Their address is ASIS/NAPS, c/o Microfiche Publications, P.O. Box 3513, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-3513; telephone (516) 481-2300.

9. Abbreviations, definitions, and symbols in the figures and tables should be explained in figure legends and table footnotes. Do not refer the reader back to the text for this information.

### Style

10. Use the active voice in the Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion; it is shorter, clearer, and more emphatic. The passive voice is appropriate in the Methods and Results, but otherwise is monotonous, suggests lack of conviction, requires more words, extends reading time, and may be ambiguous.<sup>2,3</sup>

11. For verb tenses, follow Day's rules<sup>3</sup>:

A. Use the present tense:

- i. When describing established knowledge or previously published results (i.e., "Lesions of the internal capsule cause. . .").
- ii. For "presentation" (i.e., "Figure 1 shows that. . .").

B. Use the past tense:

- i. When describing methods and results in your current paper (i.e., "we used. . ."; "we found. . .").
- ii. For attribution (i.e., "Smith reported. . .").

Avoid the present perfect tense (i.e., "Smith *has* reported. . .") when the simple past tense suffices.

12. Don't overuse italics for emphasis. A page peppered with different type styles impedes smooth reading.

13. Avoid the "reader-stopper" constructions using the words "respectively" or "former/latter." Both force the reader to stop and backtrack. Example: "The mean values for men and women were x and y, respectively." Substitute, "The mean value for men was x, and for women, y." This version is direct and permits the reader to proceed. Instead of "former" and "latter," write out the antecedents.

The "cause(s) of bad writing are many"; this popular construction also stops the reader abruptly for the sake of supposed precision. Use either the singular or plural, but not both. Do not use "and/or." Your meaning is usually conveyed by "or" alone. If necessary, add "or both" at the end of the phrase ("Subarachnoid hemorrhage can cause headache or stiff neck, or both.")

14. Be wary of the following expressions: "there were. . .," "there existed. . .," and "were present" in sentences such as, "There were 10 patients with temporal lobe seizures," "Temporal lobe seizures existed in 10 patients," or "Temporal lobe seizures were present in 10 patients." These can be expressed more directly as, "Ten patients had temporal lobe seizures."

15. The skin color or ethnic origin of a patient is usually superfluous and should appear in a case history only if later mentioned in the Discussion or if potentially useful for future studies, such as the skin color in a population with hypertension. Use "black" or "African American" and not "Negro." "African American" is not, however, synonymous with "black," and should be used only when you are certain that the person or group are indeed American.<sup>4</sup>

16. Avoid redundancies such as "one-quarter (25%)."

17. Do not use the phrase "in man"; use "in humans" instead.

18. Avoid the awkward "he/she" construction by making the subject plural: instead of "A physician should do a lumbar puncture whenever he/she suspects meningitis," use "Physicians should . . . whenever *they* suspect . . ."

19. We restrict the word "parameter" to its original mathematical definition<sup>5,6</sup>; use the more specific "range," "measurement," or "variable" instead. "Practice parameters" (clinical practice guidelines) is an allowable exception. MRI or radiographic measurement factors (constants) are "parameters" and can be described as such.

20. The words "novel" and "paradigm" are overused. Avoid them or read Goodman's essay.<sup>6</sup>

21. "Incidence" and "prevalence" should have population denominators; otherwise, the correct terms, all synonymous, are "relative frequency," "frequency," "ratio," or "percentage." A "mortality rate" also requires a population denominator and a time inter-

val; deaths among a series of patients would provide a "case fatality ratio" and not a "mortality rate."

22. "CNS" should refer to the brain *and* spinal cord. It is not a synonym for "brain" or "cerebral."

23. "Deficit" should describe only neurologic *signs* and not symptoms. The specific nature of the "deficit" must be obvious from preceding information.

24. "Onset" should refer to symptoms and not to a disease. Diseases may be silent long before symptoms manifest.

25. To avoid dehumanizing patients, consider the following:

| <u>instead of</u>       | <u>use</u>    |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| case                    | patient       |
| male or female          | man or woman  |
| male or female children | boys or girls |
| pediatric population    | children      |

26. Words and phrases that should be deleted on sight:

- *arguably* (confusing)
- *needless to say* (unnecessary; just say it)
- *peruse* (ambiguously defined)
- *recent* (does it mean last week, month, year, or decade?)
- *significant* (except if it implies a statistical difference)
- "it . . . that" constructions:
 

|  |   |
|--|---|
| it is a fact that                                      | it is of interest that                          |
| it is apparent that<br>(use "apparently")              | it is often the case<br>that (use "often")      |
| it is believed that                                    | it is possible that<br>(use "may")              |
| it is clear that (use<br>"clearly")                    | it is recognized that                           |
| it is emphasized<br>that                               | it is shown that                                |
| it is generally<br>believed that (use<br>"many think") | it may be noted that                            |
| it is known that                                       | it should be noted<br>that (use "note<br>that") |

#### 27. Other sample substitute phrases:

| <u>instead of</u>                 | <u>use</u>          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| a great number of times           | often, frequently   |
| a majority of                     | most                |
| a number of                       | some, many          |
| a small number of                 | few                 |
| a total of 100 patients           | 100 patients        |
| accounted for by the fact<br>that | because             |
| along the lines of                | like                |
| appears to be                     | seems               |
| are of the same opinion           | agree               |
| as to whether                     | whether             |
| ask the question                  | ask                 |
| at a rapid rate                   | rapidly             |
| at an earlier date                | previously, earlier |
| at the age of 30                  | at age 30           |
| at this point in time             | now                 |
| bring to a conclusion             | conclude            |

|                         |                        |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| by means of             | by                     | one in the same          | same                     |
| chose to use            | used                   | period of time           | period                   |
| completely full         | full                   | place a major emphasis   | stress                   |
| consensus of opinion    | consensus              | on                       |                          |
| considerable amount of  | many, much             | point in time            | point, time              |
| consideration should be | consider               | prior to                 | before                   |
| given to                |                        | provide a means of       | enable                   |
| control groups          | controls               | reason is because        | because                  |
| CT scan                 | CT                     | reason why               | reason                   |
| CT of the brain         | brain CT               | red in color             | red                      |
| definitely proved       | proved                 | reduced by x% compared   | x% lower than, x% less   |
| despite the fact that   | although               | with                     | than                     |
| disease process         | disease                | reported in the          | reported                 |
| due to the fact that    | because                | literature               |                          |
| during the course of    | during, while          | round in shape           | round                    |
| during the time that    | while                  | serves the function of   | is                       |
| end result              | result                 | being                    |                          |
| entirely eliminate      | eliminate              | six in number            | six                      |
| exhibit a tendency to   | tend to                | small number of          | few                      |
| extend an invitation    | invite                 | subsequent to            | after                    |
| fewer in number         | fewer                  | surgical intervention    | surgery, operation       |
| 5 cm × 3 cm in size     | 5 cm × 3 cm            | take into consideration  | consider                 |
| for a period of 5 years | for 5 years            | 10 years of age          | 10 years old             |
| for the purpose of      | for                    | testing for the presence | testing for X            |
| for the reason that     | since, because         | of X                     |                          |
| give authorization for  | authorize              | the fact that            | that                     |
| give consideration to   | consider               | the great (or vast)      | most                     |
| greater number of       | more                   | majority of              |                          |
| has the capability of   | can                    | the question as to       | whether                  |
| higher in comparison to | higher than            | whether                  |                          |
| in close proximity to   | close, near            | three-month period       | three months             |
| in my personal opinion  | in my opinion; I think | through the use of       | by, with                 |
| in order to             | to                     | to the fullest possible  | fully                    |
| in the absence of       | without                | extent                   |                          |
| in the event that       | if                     | under the direction (or  | directed (or supervised) |
| in the immediate        | near                   | supervision) of          | by                       |
| vicinity                |                        | until such time as       | until, when              |
| in the not too distant  | soon                   | was engaged in a study   | studied                  |
| future                  |                        | of                       |                          |
| in this day and age     | currently, now, today  | was found to be          | was                      |
| including but not       | including              | was of the opinion that  | believed                 |
| limited to              |                        | was variable             | varied                   |
| interval of time        | interval               | whether or not           | whether                  |
| irregardless            | regardless             | with a view to           | to                       |
| is knowledgeable of     | knows                  | with the exception of    | except for               |
| lack the ability to     | cannot                 | within the realm of      | possible                 |
| large number of         | many                   | possibility              |                          |
| less rapidly            | slower                 |                          |                          |
| make an assumption      | assume                 |                          |                          |
| that                    |                        |                          |                          |
| make mention of         | mention                |                          |                          |
| make preparations       | prepare                |                          |                          |
| merge together          | merge                  |                          |                          |
| new innovation          | innovation             |                          |                          |
| of considerable         | large                  |                          |                          |
| magnitude               |                        |                          |                          |
| of insufficient         | too small              |                          |                          |
| magnitude               |                        |                          |                          |
| of sufficient magnitude | large enough           |                          |                          |
| on a daily basis        | daily                  |                          |                          |
| on the occasion of      | on                     |                          |                          |
| on the other hand       | conversely             |                          |                          |

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