

Tips and Techniques in Writing for the HP3000 IUG Journal

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WHY WRITE?

If you are not a writer by profession, you may be hesitant about writing for a professional publication such as the HP3000 IUG Journal. The fact of the matter is that your professional skills are more important than your writing skills. Like many professional publications, The Journal builds its reputation on being written by professionals in the field for other professionals.

If you have experience, then we encourage you to share your knowledge through a Journal article. To help you get your thoughts down on paper, we have put together some tips on writing for non-writers. The professional and personal benefits derived from writing an article are of major importance.

What are the benefits to be derived from writing an article? For one thing, having an article published in the Journal generates publicity for both the author and the author's firm. The author benefits by being recognized as having expertise on the topic. Your firm benefits by being recognized as having leading professionals on its staff and by having its name brought to the attention of professionals nationwide.

Another benefit of writing an article is the personal satisfaction that comes from having contributed to the betterment of the profession through sharing your knowledge. There is also the satisfaction of seeing your name and your ideas in print.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Reviewers evaluate all articles basically on content, not grammar or literary style. For each article, the reviewers fill out an evaluation form and recommend that the article be either: (1) published; (2) revised and published; (3) revised and reviewed again; or (4) not published. Articles that are original, timely and previously unpublished, devoid of sales or promotional material, and of national interest and value to a significant number of readers have the best chance of being published.

The review process usually takes four to six weeks. As soon as the reviewers' evaluations are received, the author is notified of their decision. If the reviewers recommend that an article be revised, the author will be provided with specific recommendations.

If the information in the article could easily become dated, the author should note this in a letter attached to the article when the article is submitted for publication. The staff will then make a special effort to publish the article before the information becomes out of date and will, if necessary, contact the author for updated information immediately before publication.

Most articles will require some degree of editing before publication. The staff may suggest refinements in the areas of literary style and organization. If there are corrections in the areas of spelling, punctuation, grammar, or word choice, these will be noted on the article. The article with annotated remarks will be returned to the author for approval prior to publication unless editorial changes are minor.

On occasion, the staff may telephone an author and ask a question about the information in an article. Although the editorial reviewers do review articles for accuracy of information, the author is still responsible for the accuracy of his or her article. Also, publication of an article does not mean that the ideas expressed in the article are endorsed by the HP3000 International Users Group and/or its Journal editors.

MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

Most articles submitted for publication in the Journal are four to eight double-spaced, typewritten pages, but articles longer and shorter than this have been published. Very long articles of twenty pages or more may be published in parts as a series.

To estimate the number of pages an article will be when published, have the article typed with 50 to 55 characters on each line. This will give you the approximate number of lines the article will be when published. The Journal uses a two column format with about 55 lines per column. Hence divide the total line count by 110 (two columns of 55 lines make one page). This quotient is your rough page count.

If space is required for exhibits such as formulas, tables, charts, diagrams, and figures, then the page count should be revised upward to reflect that space.

All articles submitted for publication in the Journal should be double-spaced, typewritten on one side of

8½×11" white paper. Ample margins of at least 1 to 1½ inches should be left on all sides. Articles typed with about 53 characters on each line would be appreciated, but this is not mandatory. Subheadings should be inserted where appropriate in the article, but again, this is not mandatory. Footnotes, tables, and figures should be on sheets of paper separate from the article. Indicate the placement of tables and figures within the article by giving each table, figure, etc., a number and using this number within the text.

Footnoting has as its goal the conveying of necessary information to enable the reader to accurately identify the location of the material to which reference is being made within the article. The most important traits of footnoting are accuracy, completeness, and style consistency. If you are not familiar with footnoting techniques, several good style guides are available to serve as references. These include:

1. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, second edition 1979;
Copies may be ordered from
Publications Sales
American Psychological Association
1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
2. Form and Style — Theses, Reports, Term Papers
William Giles Campbell
Stephen Vaughn Ballou
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1974
3. A Manual for Writers
of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations
Kate L. Turabian
Fourth Edition
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973.

The above references give you the standards for footnoting. In practice when writing for our Journal or most other professional journals, read the journal in question for the style of footnoting used in that journal. By utilizing the examples found therein as a guide for your required footnotes (you may not need any), you can easily handle yours with a high probability of being correct and complete.

All pages containing copy, footnotes, tables and figures should be numbered sequentially, with tables and figures being the last of the pages. Numbering pages is important in case the pages do get out of sequence.

Black and white photographs to accompany the article are welcomed. An explanation of each photo (a caption) should be submitted with each photo. A caption can be written on the back of the photo or on a sheet of paper. If written on a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper should be numbered as the last page of the article, and if there is more than one photo, the caption should be numbered to indicate with which photo it is associated. Photos cannot be returned.

A short author's biography, including title, firm, membership in professional societies, special accom-

plishments and honors, should be submitted with the article.

If the article has been submitted to another publication or has been previously published, this should be noted in a letter accompanying the article. As mentioned before, if the information in the article can become dated soon, then this also should be noted.

Before mailing your article, read it over carefully. Recheck all figures and mathematical computations. Sometimes mistakes occur in typing. Remember, you are responsible for the accuracy of your article.

After you are certain that your article is accurate and to your liking, make a copy of it. Keep one copy for your records and mail the other to the Journal. All articles submitted to the Journal and all correspondence regarding publishing in the Journal should be addressed to:

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TIPS ON WRITING FOR NON-WRITERS

Often the task of writing seems too formidable to undertake. The ancient Chinese proverb states "Each journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." This is also true in writing. You must eventually start placing words on paper or equivalently on other media. But how do you get started? We have listed several points that we believe will be helpful to those without previous, extensive writing experience.

1. Have something to say. When writing an article for the Journal, what you have to say is more important than how you say it. Ask yourself what subject you want to write about and what you want to say about it.
2. Make a list of the points you want to discuss in the article, then arrange these points in the tentative order you want to discuss them. This will give you an outline of your article. Use single words and phrases rather than complete sentences. If the list becomes too long or unwieldy, the subject may be too broad to be covered in the space of one article. In such a case, limit the subject and eliminate several lesser points.
3. Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why and how. This is another method of preparing an outline for your article. You could also compile a list of questions you will answer in the article.
4. Pretend you are writing a long business letter on the subject or preparing a report for your firm.
5. Write as you speak. If you have difficulty getting your thoughts down on paper, try dictating them into a dictaphone or tape recorder.

6. Don't worry about saying it right the first time. Concentrate on your thoughts, not the words. Once your thoughts are written down on paper or transcribed from a dictaphone or tape recorder, you can go back and revise your wording.
7. Try "The purpose of this article is . . ." if you have difficulty starting the article. You can change this first sentence later if you want, although this is an acceptable way to begin an article. "In summary" and "in conclusion" are acceptable and easy ways to end an article.
8. If all else fails, consider having a professional writer write your article for you. Your firm may have a public relations firm on retainer or a public relations writer on staff you could use. Do make sure, though, that you provide the writer with in-depth information that is current and topical and that you review the article for accuracy and value upon completion. Otherwise, the article probably will not be of interest and value to the readers of the professional (HP3000) journal and therefore runs the risk of not being suitable for publishing.

FORMAT

There is no absolute format, standard, or arrangement that must be followed in preparing an article for a professional journal. Items that might be appropriate for one article might be totally inappropriate in another. After the author has selected those things about which to write, the format or physical arrangement (headings) can be determined. To aid the writer, sections with appropriate headings and subheadings might be selected from the following list (in about the same order):

Report Title

Introduction

Background

Problem Statement

Information Sources

Procedures

Design of experiment or solution

Sample Selection

Equipment

Measures Used

Findings (Data)

Presentation of facts and data

Interpretation of findings

Limitations of "facts" meanings

Summary and Conclusions

Short restatement of goals for article

Brief statement of findings

Any conclusions

Suitable recommendations

References (Bibliography)

Appendix (if any)

Again we stress that the above list is a very formal list of topics that might be found in some research papers. Rarely would all of these be found in the average journal

article. However, some of these may provide an outline or skeleton upon which you may structure your writing and aid you in a readable, logical organization for your paper. Select from the topics on the list a topical outline that suits your article; utilize headings and structure to augment or replace these topics as your article requires.

STYLE AND READABILITY

Articles for professional journals sometimes suffer from being too stiff and rigid and/or from being awkwardly worded. Authors should strive for a style that is clear, direct, and effective. Word choice should be appropriate for the populace that reasonably might be expected to read the article. Therefore word choice should be chosen so as to both convey the problem and its solution and as well not require the reader to use a dictionary for frequent translation. Articles should be written in a direct, straightforward manner without being overly elaborate and structurally complex. Although, as earlier mentioned, there are writing conventions common to writing for professional journals, these should not interfere to the point of making good writing bad. Rather each author should utilize his/her individual skills in communications to convey meaning to the reader. Several methods (3:41-3) for improving readability follow:

1. Appeal and interest increase readability.
2. Personalization means putting human interest into the report: through a review of previous investigations as a story of other persons' successes and failures, an account of how the author collected and treated the data, illustrative cases, and deviations from central tendencies.
3. Pattern or design should be made plain to the reader.
4. Through appropriate emphasis the reader should get the important points.
5. Too great density or concentration of ideas may make reading difficult, requiring some expansion or dilution.
6. Plain words are important in making a report readable.

Remember that style is to foster clear and effective communication, not to confuse it. Carter Good reports (2:409) "As long as young scientists and scholars write accurately, clearly, and attractively, their differences in expression may render science a happier way of life for them and for the reader."

SUCCESS

We have stressed those points that we believe important in writing a journal or other professional article. Many of these are somewhat mechanical and pro forma; others are good sense types of points. It all requires an idea, a suggestion, a fresh point of view, something important enough to justify your writing and others reading. You may say, "But no one has ever heard of me

before. What chance have I to write something and see it published?" Not surprisingly, what you have to share and say is more important than who you are or where you are from. Thomas Frantz (3:384-386) surveyed the editorial boards of six professional journals and asked these editors to rank order criteria commonly used in evaluating manuscripts for journal publication. His findings follow in tabular form.

TABLE 1

Summary of 14 Criteria for Evaluation of Manuscripts Ranked in Importance by 55 Members of the Editorial Boards of Six Journals

Criteria	Mean Rank	S.D.
1. Contribution to knowledge	1.8	1.2
2. Design of study	3.5	2.1
3. Objectivity in reporting results	4.7	2.3
4. Topic selection	5.5	2.9
5. Writing style and readability	5.7	2.7
6. Practical implications	6.4	3.3
7. Statistical Analyses	6.5	2.5
8. Theoretical Model	7.0	2.7
9. Review of the literature	7.2	2.3
10. Clarity of tabular material	8.1	2.3
11. Length	10.2	1.6
12. Punctuation	11.5	1.9

13. Reputation of author	12.6	1.9
20. Institutional affiliation	13.5	0.9

The above research reports that the contribution to knowledge the article makes is of primary importance. Also, as the article reports, among the top six criteria are objectivity, topic selection, writing style and readability, and practical applications. Of least importance are the author's reputation and institutional affiliation. The moral here is that "who you are" is not important; rather "what you say, what it means, and how it reads" are all nearly equally important.

Don't get discouraged if your article is not accepted for publication. Usually, the reason an article is not accepted for publication is that it is too general in scope and does not provide enough in-depth information to be valuable to other professionals. Keep in mind that many famous authors have had articles rejected for publication but did not quit trying. As the saying goes, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

REFERENCES

1. Frantz, T. F. "Criteria for Publishable Manuscripts," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 47 (1968), 384-386.
2. Good, C. *Essentials of Educational Research*, New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1966.
3. Strang, R. "Principles of Readability Applied to Reporting Research," *Improving Educational Research*. Washington: American Educational Research Association, 1948. p. 41-43.