

Guidelines For Preparing Research Report Articles

Format

Articles must be submitted on a 3.5-inch diskette using WordPerfect or MS Word. One paper copy must accompany the required Manuscript Approval Form. Figures must be submitted on paper and will be electronically scanned.

Articles will concisely summarize research results and the importance of these results to the audience. These certainly aren't journal articles, nor are they exactly popular articles either. Articles should contain information crucial in helping a producer understand and possibly apply the research results.

Articles should be written in a modified "inverted pyramid," a journalistic phrase that means you supply the most important information first and then provide other information in descending order of importance. While the inverted pyramid is not 100% appropriate for this type of article, a modified version of it is optimum. In other words, after reading the first paragraph or two, the reader should know what problem was addressed, what our researchers did to confront the problems, and *the most significant* finding of the project. This information should be briefly summarized; further details can be added later. Upon finishing the article, a reader must have no doubt what the purpose of the research was and what value its results will have in the real world. It might help authors to think of these articles as an abstract designed for a semi-technical audience.

Minimize methodology to the extreme. Eliminate experimental design unless absolutely necessary to convey the meaning of the project. Focus almost totally on the results, providing the most crucial information in the most concise way possible. If the article reports a complex project involving multiple treatments or multiple experiments, don't go into minute detail on each treatment or experiment. Summarize the goal of the project and tell the reader which approach worked. Don't present a massive amount of numerical data in the text; put it in a table or figure. The text should serve to elaborate on data presented in a table. Also don't repeat verbatim information already presented in a table or figure.

Frequently, due to when the deadline for this publication occurs, researchers will not have time to fully analyze final data from a study before these articles are written. It is acceptable in such cases to summarize the results that are available. Similarly, it is also acceptable to report on one year of a multi-year study. However, make it clear in the article that the results are not final and further research is needed before the findings can be applied in the field. Authors should later update these preliminary articles in subsequent research reports.

Article Length

In the final design, one-page articles are optimum. That means 650-700 words of plain text (no tables or figures); 500-550 words with a small table (4 rows x 6 columns, for example) or one simple figure; 400-450 words with two small tables or one big table (11 rows x 8 columns) or two simple figures. Articles can be longer if there's just no way whatsoever to condense the information. However, two-page articles (final design version) would be the absolute maximum and should be exceedingly rare. Also, there is a minimum length; 300-350 words of plain text or 200 words with a small table or figure. Such smaller articles would take about half a page in the final publication.

Style Considerations

Measurement - Avoid metric measurement whenever possible; pounds per acre, ounces per gallon, pints per square foot, etc., should always be used rather than their metric equivalents. However, there are times when metric is better, such as when dealing with very small measurements. Saying 0.0023 inch does sound funny. In these cases, millimeters, etc., are acceptable. The author should define the metric terms in

parentheses. However, if the measurement becomes large enough to easily express in inches, pounds, etc., use the English measurement.

Numbers - Numbers 10 and above are always expressed as numerals in the text, except at the beginning of sentences. Always use commas in numbers 1,000 or higher in text and tables. In general, words are used for numbers one through nine. However, there are many exceptions. Numerals should be used when they appear before a percent sign (1%), after a dollar sign (\$5), or are part of a fraction (3/4), decimal (2.34), title (Experiment 1), or mathematical equation ($2B=4C$). Numerals used to list items in a series are acceptable: (1) first point; (2) second point; etc.

Abbreviations - Do not abbreviate feet, pounds, acres, ounces, pints, or gallons in the text. Never say pounds/acre; instead use pounds per acre. Abbreviations for nitrogen and other nutrients, and metric terms can be used after the first reference. The first reference should use the whole word and be followed by a parentheses with the abbreviation – 10 centimeters (cm).

Terminology - Be careful with jargon or overly technical terms. If the producer is not likely to understand it, don't use it. If such terms are crucial to convey the importance of the project, briefly define them. The articles must be readable by a wide range of people – from highly adept producers to backyard gardeners.

Table Design - Don't use the table command for tables. Simply use one or two tabs between each column – not a combination of tabs and spaces, just tabs. Do not put lines in the table unless needed for proper understanding. For example, if the heading "Yield" has three subheadings, "Planting Date 1," etc., a line would be needed to tell the editor that the subs are arranged under the main heading.

Miscellaneous - Don't use subheads. Don't use footnote commands, page numbering, bold face, underline, or other WordPerfect or MS Word line commands. We just need plain text. Italics are OK if you're using a scientific term. Don't skip an extra line between paragraphs, but do place a single tab at the beginning of each paragraph. Skip only one space between sentences.

Department Review and Editing Procedure

Each article must go through the review process of the respective departments of which the authors are members. Articles will then be submitted to Joe Kemble or Bob Ebel of Horticulture, who coordinate the publication. Reviewers should not spend a lot of time editing for grammar and punctuation. They should instead critique the scientific validity of the articles and make sure that they answer questions that a producer would need to know. Reviewers should not force the articles into the style of the respective journals to which authors contribute scientific articles. Style and format parameters defined in these pages will take precedence.

The Office of Communications will then edit the articles, focusing on grammar, punctuation, conciseness, and readability. Once the articles are edited, they will be returned to authors for review. (Guidelines developed by Robyn Hearn.)

For more information, contact Office of Communications, at 844-4877.