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Post

Adam Kucharski reposted
Michael White
@MWClimateSci

I've handled the review of > 1000 papers at @nature. Over time, you notice aspects of presentation on which reviewers tend to comment. In the interests of minimizing hassles during review, I offer the following suggestions (a bit targeted to climate papers).

12:34 AM · Mar 30, 2019

104

5K

9.7K

2.3K



Post your reply

Reply



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Double space: make it easy on the reader (and editor) by double spacing the entire text, including references and figure legends.

17

34

310



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Use big fonts: again, make the paper easy to read. Tracking 30 words across one line in a tiny font is hard, especially if you are reading for hours at a time. Instead, use a font that provides about 12-15 words per line of text.

2

21

236



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Use continuous line numbers: reviewers like to refer to specific line numbers and frequently comment on their absence.

4

30

288



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Avoid subjective wording: reviewers will often object to words/phrases like "unprecedented", "paradigm shift", "amazing", "dramatic", and "remarkable". Best to present your results, and let the readers make up their minds about the magnitude of the advance.

6

85

705



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Avoid acronyms: a rule of thumb might be to use an acronym if the term is used at least five times. Do use common acronyms, like SST, CDW, NPP, AMOC. Avoid, if at all possible, inventing acronyms that are unique to your paper.

13

77

527



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Avoid words like "influence": instead, state the direction of the effect you're describing. So, instead of hypothetically writing "Precipitation influences net primary production" write "Precipitation increases net primary production". Better yet, use numbers.

2

65

597



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Avoid using "significant" to mean "big" or "major": too easily confused with the results of a statistical test. Even if you are reporting the results of a statistical test, it's better to report the numerical results instead. In fact, best to avoid "significantly" entirely.

4

79

689



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Define uncertainties: probably half of initial submissions do not fully define the meaning of error bars and/or uncertainties. 95% confidence intervals, ranges, 2 sigma? Is the box plot showing the interquartile range, or something else? Tell us, in the figure legend.

1

38

394



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Consider accessibility: try to use colors in a way that won't create problems for the many readers with some form of color blindness (for a good discussion and design suggestions see somersault1824.com/tips-for-design/).

16

152

756



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Avoid rainbow color schemes: see [endrainbow](https://endrainbow.com/) for discussion, much of it from [@ed_hawkins](https://twitter.com/ed_hawkins). For more, and palettes: matplotlib.org/colocore/ gis.nasa.gov/tools/panoply/ colorbrewer2.org/#type=sequential... cran.r-project.org/web/packages/v...

7

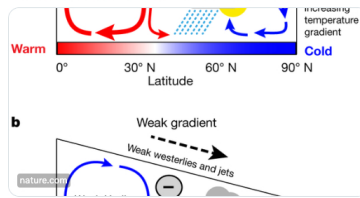
83

549



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Use divergent colors when appropriate: in an anomaly graph, it's often helpful to set zero as white and then ramp up to two colors. For example, panel f in Extended Data figure 6 in Cody Roushton's recent [nature paper](https://www.nature.com/articles/s4158...)



2

31

251



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Simplify figures: we often see maps with colors and contours used to display the same data. This can be confusing, as the reader may think that different datasets are being displayed on the same map. Normally, one or the other is sufficient.

4

17

194



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Use a declarative title: reviewers (and editors) will often recommend a declarative title. Instead of a hypothetical title like "Trends in groundwater storage" try "A doubling of groundwater loss since 2010".

3

59

416



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Follow a template for your abstract: The abstract/first paragraph of [nature](https://www.nature.com/) papers is fairly standardized, and it can be helpful to follow our template, even for non-[nature](https://www.nature.com/) papers. [nature.com/documents/natu...](https://www.nature.com/documents/natu...)

2

72

433



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Provide short titles for figure legends: sometimes this can be descriptive, like "Study area". But if possible, make the title declarative, like "Habitat fragmentation increases cloud condensation nuclei" (hypothetical).

2

22

215



Michael White @MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

Provide inline figures and legends: at least for the purposes of review at

Search

@nature, it's time to provide figures and legends as part of a single figure, with the figures placed at an appropriate location in the text.

5

25

212

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

...

I know that many of these suggestions must seem blindingly obvious and I hope not to have come across as condescending (particularly as I failed to implement many of these practices when I was an academic). Hopefully at least some will prove useful!

33

66

770

Will Ratcliff

@wc_ratcliff · Sep 4, 2019

...

@MWClimateSci, thanks for the thoughtful advice. In your experience, how do papers formatted in LaTeX to using a journal-specific template do? That is, does it help for the MS to already look like a nature paper, or does that turn off referees? @YunkerLab

1

2

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Sep 4, 2019

...

I'd say it's largely irrelevant. More important is to ensure readability itself.

1

5

Show replies

Hessam AzariJafari

@hessam_aj · Apr 1, 2019

...

A quick question relevant to your role and might be related to this thread; Do you consider citations of a submitted manuscript to assess if the paper is inside the scope and relevant (should there be some from ur journal)? 🙏

1

3

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Apr 1, 2019

...

Not really. Mostly I evaluate the novelty and conceptual advance based on my knowledge of the field combined with literature searches. Citations in the submission may or may not accurately reflect the state of knowledge.

3

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2

1

41

47K

Dan Marsh

@Daniel_R_Marsh · Mar 31, 2019

...

Great list. Plans to put it somewhere more permanent? It would be great to share with students.

1


3

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Mar 31, 2019

...

I could post it over on my podcast site somewhere (forecastpod.org). Would that help? Or too obscure?



forecastpod.org
About
Visit the post for more.

2

2

15

Show replies

Bryce Stewart

@BDStew · Apr 6, 2019

...

Just did my best to use all these tips in a paper I submitted this week. Thanks again. Hopefully it gets accepted!

1

5

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Apr 6, 2019

...

Good luck Bryce!

1

2

Show replies

Colm Ryan

@TheRealColmRyan · Mar 31, 2019

...

Superb tweet (not sure if superb would be allowed by ur definitions 🤔)....so, are you publishing these tweets as an article somewhere?

1

2

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Mar 31, 2019

...

Yes, somewhere!

2

Show replies

Ana Cláudia

@Aniclaudia · Mar 30, 2019

...

Thanks for the suggestions. I have a question though. Many journals request specific formatting that goes against your recommendations. How to get around that?

1

7

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

...

I think you'd probably have to follow the specific journal's guidelines. I'm curious - which suggestions tend to run counter to formatting requirements?

1

8

Show replies

Timothy E. Wright

@wrightdydromet · Mar 30, 2019

...

Great advice! I do this for reports and presentations for clients, judges, and juries in my forensic meteorology work. Clarifies things, cuts the confusion, and reduces unnecessary cross examination questions.

2

7

Michael White

@MWClimateSci · Mar 30, 2019

...

Thanks! I didn't even know that forensic meteorology existed. Fascinating!

2

15

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Relevant people

Michael White

@MWClimateSci

Follow

Climate science editor for @nature. Views my own. Climate podcasts at forecastpod.org. Baker, cyclist, recovering academic.

nature

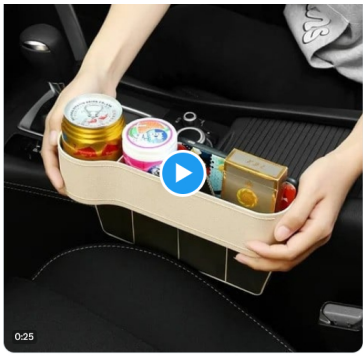
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- #PromiBB
5,880 posts
- 3 · Trending
- #Haushaltssperre
23.5K posts
- 4 · Football · Trending
- #DFBTeam
2,833 posts
- 5 · Trending
- Iris
33.1K posts
- 6 · Sports · Trending
- Nagelsmann
9,880 posts
- 7 · Trending
- Sane
34.8K posts
- 8 · Trending
- Wochenteiler
- 9 · Sports · Trending
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3,887 posts
- 10 · Trending
- Yvonne
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2 1 41 47K

Dr Karen Wright @iamkarenwright · Mar 31, 2019
@threadreaderapp unroll please

1 1

C. Savio Chan @csaviochan · Mar 30, 2019
@threadreaderapp unroll

1 2

Paul Ruscher @paul_ruscher · Mar 30, 2019
@threadreaderapp unroll please!

1 20

NatFilosof PhD @NatFilosof · Mar 31, 2019
Don't you think it would be more transparent, less biased, more accurate, and lead to more progress, to use truthsift.com instead of traditional refereeing?



1

Roger Giner-Sorolla @RogertheGS · Mar 30, 2019
Advice I never thought I'd have to give as an editor:

USE PAGE NUMBERS

4 1 118

Bret Webb @dr_bw · Mar 30, 2019
This is great advice. Thanks for taking the time to share your insights.

1 19

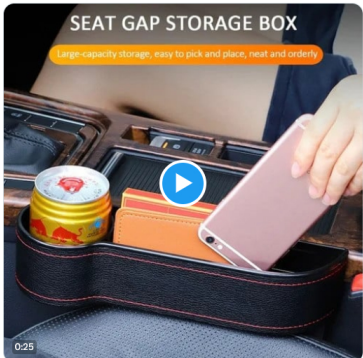
André Marques-Smith, PhD @TheFrontalLobe_ · Mar 30, 2019
@threadreaderapp unroll

1

Aline Villarreal @Alincita09 · May 20, 2020
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1

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1 2 46 107K

Phil Ross @biophilross · Mar 31, 2019
@threadreaderapp unroll, please!

1

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