

Scientific Writing

There are both similarities and differences between scientific writing and the writing done in other courses. Similarities include the need for attention to proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as the need for a clear, coherent structure. Grading of scientific writing takes all of these things into account, just as in other courses!

Differences are matters of style. Scientific writing generally avoids the use of the first person (I and we); instead, the third person, passive voice is used. For example, instead of writing “I added the reagent...,” one would write “The reagent was added... .” Sentences should not begin with numbers. Instead of writing “50 mL of acid was added,” one would write “A 50-mL portion of acid was added.” Get in the habit of using subscripts, superscripts, and symbols properly when using word processing software. The following two links may be helpful:

[How to get specialized chemistry symbols in Microsoft Word.](#)

[Chemistry Formatter add-in for Microsoft Word and Excel:](#) a great help for subscripts, superscripts, arrows, etc.

References on Scientific Writing (all found in the College library)

Alley, Michael, *The Craft of Scientific Writing*, 3rd ed., Springer, 1996. Link to [website](#) with useful information.

American Chemical Society, *Handbook for Authors of Papers in American Chemical Society Publications*, American Chemical Society, 1978.

Barrass, Robert, *Scientists Must Write : a Guide to Better Writing for Scientists, Engineers and Students*, Chapman and Hall, 1982.

Day, Robert A., *How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper*, 4th ed., Oryx Press, 1994.

Ebel, Hans Friedrich, *The Art of Scientific Writing : From Student Reports to Professional Publications in Chemistry and Related Fields*, VCH, 1987.

Fieser, Louis Frederick, and Mary Fieser, *Style Guide for Chemists*, Reinhold, 1960.

Hays, Robert William, *Principles of Technical Writing*, Addison-Wesley, 1965.

Kanare, Howard M., *Writing the Laboratory Notebook*, American Chemical Society, 1985.

Katz, Michael Jay, *Elements of the Scientific Paper*, Yale University Press, 1985.

Morris, Jackson E., *Principles of Scientific and Technical Writing*, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

Internet Resources

[Writing for Scientists:](#) SLDC site

[Writing Guidelines for Engineering and Science Students:](#) A wealth of information on scientific writing and presentations. This site is related to Alley's text listed above.

[Scientific Writing:](#) from the Duke University Writing Studio

[Writing in the Sciences:](#) UNC Writing Center

[Writing in Scientific Journal Style:](#) Bates College Dept. of Biology