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Writing for science journals: Tips, tricks, and a learning plan

By [Yateendra Joshi](#) | May 12, 2015
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Reading a book running to more than 600 pages can be a daunting task. But the book I'm referring to, *Writing for Science Journals: tips, tricks, and a learning plan* ^[1], should be used as a manual. Readers can dip into it as required, more so because the structure of the book and the comprehensive index

facilitate such use. It is this attitude of helping the authors of research papers, which shines through the pages of the book, that makes the book special.

But first, let me highlight the author's qualifications. This book is authored by Geoffrey Hart, a scientist who turned to scientific editing—from studying how trees survive in Canada's boreal forests to studying how research papers (and their authors) survive in the forests of journal publishing and, 25 years and editing 5700 research papers later, mastered the intricacies of the writing process from the stage at which a researcher contemplates publication all the way to eventual acceptance of the manuscript.

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The author not only states his purpose in writing the book but also makes it clear what he has left out, namely presentations, theses, science writing for magazines, and writing academic books. The book seeks “to teach you the thought process involved in planning, preparing, writing, revising, and publishing a paper in a peer-reviewed science journal. To do so, I’ll teach you what you need to know to turn your data into a published journal paper. Along the way, I’ll try to reveal some of the dirty tricks and unspoken secrets involved in this line of work—things that everyone takes for granted and therefore forgets to pass on to their younger colleagues or graduate students.”

In 24 chapters, the book covers all aspects of turning research into published papers, including publishing ethics, design of experiments, and statistical analysis. Specific chapters deal with specific components of a typical research paper: thus a chapter each is devoted to 1) titles, author information, abstracts, and keywords, 2) introduction, 3) materials and methods, 4) results, and 5) discussion and conclusions. These chapters are followed by two more, one on acknowledgements and conflicts of interest and one on citations and references. Even online supplemental material - now increasingly common - has a separate chapter.

Whereas many books on research writing touch upon writing style and common errors in writing English, this book also devotes a chapter to using word processors for writing. The concluding chapters deal with the review process and acceptance and publication (which includes advice on proof-reading, securing permissions, and relevant aspects of copyright).

All in all, *Writing for Science Journals: tips, tricks, and a learning plan* is an eminently useful reference book that aspiring authors should consult as they work their way through the maze that is publishing a research paper.

[1] Hart G. 2014. *Writing for Science Journals: tips, tricks, and a learning plan*. Pointe-Claire, Quebec, Canada: Diaskeuasis Publishing. 634 pp.
 <www.geoff-hart.com/books/journals/journal-book.htm>

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