

Manuscript formatting

This guide describes how to prepare contributions for submission. We recommend you also read the full version on www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta.

Before submission, we recommend authors familiarize themselves with *Nature's* style and content by reading the journal, (in print or online at www.nature.com/nature), particularly if they have not submitted papers recently.

1. Formats for *Nature* contributions

Nature's main formats for original research are Articles and Letters. The journal also publishes a few Brief Communications and other submitted material (1.4).

1.1 Articles

are original reports whose conclusions represent a substantial advance in the understanding of an important problem and have immediate, far-reaching implications. They have no more than 50 references.

Articles have a separate summary of up to 150 words, which has no references, and does not contain numbers, abbreviations, acronyms or measurements unless essential. It contains 2-3 sentences of basic-level introduction to the field; a brief account of the background and rationale of the work; a statement of the main conclusions (introduced by the phrase 'Here we show' or its equivalent); and 2-3 sentences putting the main findings into general context so it is clear how the results described have moved the field forwards.

Articles are typically 3,000 words of text (not including Methods, summary or other sections), beginning with up to 500 words of referenced text expanding on the background to the work, before proceeding to a concise, focused account of the findings, ending with one or two short paragraphs of discussion.

The text may contain subheadings (less than six in total) of less than 40 characters (inc. spaces) each. Articles have 5 or 6 display items (figures or tables).

1.2 Letters

are short reports of original research focused on an outstanding finding whose importance means that it will be of interest to scientists in other fields. They have no more than 30 references.

They begin with a fully referenced paragraph, of about 200 words, (certainly no more than 300 words) aimed at readers in other disciplines. This starts with a 2-3 sentence basic introduction to the field; followed by a one-sentence statement of the main conclusions starting 'Here we show' or equivalent phrase; and 2-3 sentences putting the main findings into general context. See the annotated example at www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta/Letter_bold_para.doc.

The rest of the text is typically about 1,500 words long (not including Methods, summary paragraph or other sections). Letters have 3 or 4 small display items.

1.3 Brief Communications and Communications Arising (www.nature.com/nature/authors/briefcomms)

Brief Communications are short, peer-reviewed research reports focused on a single finding. They are less formal than Articles and Letters, and are aimed at the broadest possible scientific readership.

Communications Arising are exceptionally interesting or important comments and clarifications on original research papers or other peer-reviewed material published in *Nature*, and are published online only.

1.4 Other contributions to *Nature*

Nature also publishes Correspondence, Commentary, Book Reviews, Essays, News and Views, Reviews and Progress, Insights, Analyses, Hypotheses, Nature Jobs editorial articles and Technology features. Please see www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta/others.

2. The editorial process

Please see www.nature.com/nature/authors/get_published.

3. Presubmission enquiries

are an author service and are not required by the journal. They must take the form of a paragraph stating the interest to a broad readership, a fully referenced summary in the style for Letters, and a reference list. Presubmission enquiries are **not** available for Brief Communications.

4. Readability

Contributions should be clear and simple so that they are accessible to readers in other disciplines and to readers for whom English is not their first language. A useful set of writing guides is available at www.scidev.net/howdoi.

For **gene, protein and other specialized names** authors can use their preferred terminology so long as it is in current use by the community. They must give all known names for the entity at first use in the paper.

Authors of papers that contain **taxonomy** (the formal nomenclature and description of new species) must send a copy of the published paper by mail (not email) upon publication to the Executive Secretary, the Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BF, UK.

5. Format of Articles and Letters.

Contributions should be double-spaced and written in English (spellings as in the Oxford English Dictionary).

Contributions should be organized in the sequence: title, text, methods, references, end notes, tables, figure legends.

5.1 Titles

do not exceed 90 characters (inc. spaces) for Letters, or 75 characters (inc. spaces) for Articles. Titles should not include numbers, acronyms, abbreviations or punctuation. They should include sufficient detail for indexing purposes but be general enough for readers outside the field to appreciate what the paper is about.

5.2 Text

Articles should fill no more than 5 pages, and Letters no more than 4 pages, of *Nature*. An uninterrupted page of text contains about 1,300 words. Authors should state in a cover letter to the editor their rough estimate of the length of their paper in terms of number of pages of *Nature*, after reducing display items to the smallest acceptable size (see 5.9).

Nature prefers authors to be listed without details of relative status, but instead to specify the contribution made by co-authors in the end notes of the paper.

Present addresses appear after the author address list (below the footnote rule at the bottom of the first page) and may be identified by a dagger symbol.

5.3 Methods.

If brief (less than 200 words), they can be included in the text at an appropriate place. Otherwise, they should be described at the end of the text in a 'Methods' section, subdivided by short, bold headings.

Descriptions of methods already published should be avoided. This whole section should not exceed 800 words and if possible should be shorter. If more space is required, the author is advised to submit the extra material as Supplementary Information.

5.4 References

are each numbered, ordered sequentially as they appear in the text, methods, tables, figure legends.

When cited in the text, reference numbers are superscript, not in parentheses unless they are likely to be confused with a superscript number. Only one publication can be listed for each number.

Only articles that have been published or submitted to a named publication are included in the reference list; papers in preparation are mentioned in the text with a

list of authors (or initials if any of the authors are co-authors of the present contribution).

Published conference abstracts, numbered patents and preprints on recognized servers are included in reference lists, but text, grant details and acknowledgements are not.

In preparing reference lists, please ensure that:

- Authors are listed surname first, followed by a comma and initials of given names. All authors are included in reference lists unless there are more than five, in which case only the first author should be given, followed by '*et al.*'.
- Titles of all cited articles are given in upright, not italic text. The first word of the title is capitalized, the title written exactly as it appears in the work cited, ending with a full stop. Book titles are italic with all main words capitalized. Journal titles are italic and abbreviated according to common usage (see published issues of *Nature*).
- Volume numbers are bold. The publisher and city of publication are required for books cited.
- References to online-only journals are in the style: authors, article title and journal name as above, followed by url in full - or doi if known - and the year of publication in parentheses.
- References to websites are in the style: authors (if known), title of cited page, url in full, and year of posting in parentheses.

5.5 End notes

are brief and follow the reference list.

End notes contain a statement for supplementary information and summary schematics where present; acknowledgements; author contributions; and author information. For full details see www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta/index.html#a5.5 or consult our annotated example at www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta/End_notes.doc.

5.6 Statistics

Please also consult the statistical checklist at www.nature.com/nature/authors/gta/Stat_checklist.doc.

Papers with statistical testing should state the name of the test, the n for each analysis, the comparisons of interest, a justification for the use of that test, the alpha level for all tests, whether the tests were one- or two-tailed, and the **actual** P value for each test.

Data sets should be summarized with descriptive statistics, which should include the n for each data set, a clearly labelled measure of centre (such as the mean or the median), and a clearly labelled measure of variability (such as the standard deviation or range).

Graphs should include **clearly labelled error bars as part of the figure legend**. Authors must state whether a number that follows the \pm sign is a standard error (s.e.m.) or a standard deviation (s.d.).

Authors should be aware that all referees are asked to review any statistical analysis present.

5.7 Tables.

Tables should be presented on separate pages, portrait orientation, and upright on the page.

Tables have a short, one-line title in bold text and should be as small as possible. Symbols and abbreviations are defined immediately below the table, followed by essential descriptive material as briefly as possible, in double-spaced text.

5.8 Figure legends.

Figure legends should be listed one after the other, **as part of the text document, separate from the figure files**. Please do not write a legend below each figure.

Each figure legend should begin with a brief title for the **whole figure** and continue with a short description of each panel and the symbols used. For contributions with methods sections, legends should not contain details of methods, or exceed 100 words (fewer than 500 words for the whole paper). In contributions without methods sections, legends should be less than 300 words (less than 800 words in total).

5.9 Figures

Nature requires electronic figures that are as small and simple as is compatible with clarity. At submission these should be good enough quality to be assessed by referees, ideally as JPEGs, but should not be at the high resolution necessary for publication quality. See www.nature.com/nature/authors/submissions.

Figures should not contain more than one panel unless the parts are logically connected; each panel of a multipart figure should be sized so that the whole figure can be reduced by the same amount and reproduced on the printed page at the smallest size at which essential details are visible. For guidance, a *Nature* page is 183mm wide and 247mm deep.

Nature encourages authors to submit with their manuscripts a scanned pdf of any composite figures with the panels arranged and the whole reduced to the size the author envisages on a printed page.

Amino-acid sequences should be in Courier (or other monospaced) font using the one-letter code in lines of 50 or 100 characters.

Lettering in figures should be in lower-case type, with the first letter capitalized and no full stop. **Units** should have a single space between the number and the unit, and follow SI nomenclature or the nomenclature common to a particular field. Thousands should be separated by commas (1,000). Unusual units or abbreviations are defined in the legend. **Scale bars** should be used rather than magnification factors.

Layering type directly over shaded or textured areas and using reversed type (white lettering on a coloured background) should be avoided where possible.

Text, including keys to symbols, should be provided in the legend rather than on the figure itself.

Costs: We charge £700 for the first colour figure and £250 for each additional one. *Nature* bears the remaining reproduction costs. Inability to pay this fee will not prevent publication of essential colour figures.

5.10 Production-quality figures.

When a manuscript is accepted in principle for publication, the editor will ask for high-resolution figures. Do not submit publication-quality figures until asked to do so by an editor. See guidelines at www.nature.com/nature/authors/submissions/final.

5.11 Supplementary Information

This is online-only, peer-reviewed material that is essential background to the Article or Letter, but which is too large or impractical to be included in the printed version. See www.nature.com/nature/author/submissions.

Nature strongly encourages authors to include a simple schematic in their SI that summarises the main finding of the paper, where appropriate (for example, to assist understanding of complex detail in cell, structural and molecular biology disciplines). Authors including a schematic in their SI should refer to it explicitly in the summary paragraph of their main article, and elsewhere in the text where it would assist the reader's understanding.

6. Submission

Articles and Letters should be submitted online or, if this is not possible, by post. **E-mailed submissions will not be considered**. See www.nature.com/nature/authors/submissions for details.

Before submitting, all coauthors must have read and agreed to *all Nature's* publication policies, as outlined at www.nature.com/nature/authors/policy/index.html.