

## Guide to authors of contributions to *Nature*

*Nature* is a weekly international journal covering all the sciences. It is intended for an interdisciplinary readership, so all manuscripts should be written clearly and simply. Contributors should pay particular attention to the fact that English is not the first language of many readers. Space is limited and competition severe, so brevity is highly valued.

*Nature* publishes the following types of article:

**Review articles** survey recent developments in a topical area of scientific research. Contributors wishing to submit a review should first send a one-page synopsis to the Reviews Coordinator.

- Reviews inform a broad readership about fields where there are rapid, important advances.
- They focus on one topical aspect of a field rather than providing a comprehensive literature survey.
- They can be controversial but in this event should briefly indicate opposing viewpoints. They should not be focused on the author's own work.
- Language should be simple, novel concepts defined and jargon explained.
- Reviews should not be more than 6,000 words and ideally should be shorter. There should be no more than 100 references and ideally half that number. There is no limit to the number of display items or explanatory boxes (used for clarification of technical points or for background material), but reviews do not generally take more than six pages of *Nature*.

• Review articles are often substantially edited by *Nature*'s editors in consultation with the author.

**Progress** articles review particularly topical and fast-moving fields for a nonspecialist readership. They are similar to Reviews except for the following:

- They do not exceed four pages of *Nature* in length, including display items and references. (One printed page of text is about 1,300 words.)
- They focus on current papers of outstanding interest that are setting new standards in a field.
- Because of their topicality, Progress articles should be written and submitted within a few weeks of *Nature*'s editors expressing an interest in a synopsis.
- Authors may discuss their own work, but should make it clear in the text if they are presenting a personal, rather than a consensus, view.
- Titles are brief (generally a single line) and relatively informal.

**Articles** are reports of original scientific research.

- They report novel conclusions of broad general scientific interest.
- They represent a substantial advance in scientific understanding of an important problem.
- They should not be longer than 3,000 words, have more than six display items (with captions of fewer than 300 words) or have more than 50 references.
- They have a 'heading' of up to 80 words, often rewritten by *Nature*'s editors, which advertises the content of the paper in general terms. The heading should not contain numbers, abbreviations or measurements unless central to the message of the paper.
- The introduction and summary should be contained in the first two or three paragraphs of the main text.

**Letters to *Nature*** are short reports focused on a novel, outstanding finding.

- The implications of the main result are of interest to nonspecialists.
- They should not exceed 2 1/2 pages of *Nature*, equivalent to 1,500 words of text with four small display items that have brief captions.
- They have a bold-text first paragraph of not more than 150 words summarizing the rationale for the study, the main result and conclusion. This paragraph is aimed particularly at nonspecialist readers.
- Letters should have fewer than 30 references and no more than four display items. Captions should not exceed 300 words.
- **Articles and Letters** contain a statement at the end of the text: "Correspondence and requests for materials to xxxx". Database accession numbers should be included after this statement.

### Preparation of manuscripts

- All manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only.
- Manuscripts should be accompanied by a brief cover letter from the corresponding author, containing a full postal address, telephone and fax number, and e-mail address.
- Five copies of manuscripts and original figures are needed, together with two copies of the covering letter.
- Five copies of relevant related manuscripts in press or submitted for publication elsewhere should be included, clearly marked as such.
- Unless otherwise instructed by the editor handling a manuscript, when sending revised or resubmitted manuscripts, five copies are required, each accompanied by a copy of the authors' response to ref-

erees' and editors' comments on the earlier version.

- Titles should be brief, pertinent and simple, avoiding active verbs, numerical values, abbreviations and punctuation.
- References are numbered sequentially as they appear in the text, tables and figure legends. Only papers that are published or in press should be given numbers: manuscripts submitted or in preparation should be mentioned in the text with a list of authors.
- Reference lists contain only citations to published papers, and do not contain textual material, grant details or acknowledgements.
- Acknowledgements must be brief and appear after the reference list. *Nature* does not publish grant contribution numbers.
- Figures should not be larger than 22 by 28 cm unless unavoidable. They should be marked with the author's name and, where known, the manuscript reference number. One photocopy of the original figures should be provided. All original figures are returned when *Nature* cannot offer to publish a manuscript, but one copy of the manuscript and the photocopy of the figures are kept in confidential files for three months and then destroyed. Detailed instructions for preparation of figures are available from the production department, and digital files of final versions of the figures may be requested.
- Colour figures are welcome but a contribution towards the cost of reproduction is requested. Inability to pay this charge will not prevent *Nature* publishing figures where colour is essential.
- Figures containing protein/nucleotide sequence information should ideally use the three-letter code for amino acids. One column width can accommodate 20 amino acids or 60 base pairs.
- Figure legends should contain fewer than 300 words. They should consist of a brief description of the figure (title, explanation of the parts, explanation of symbols) followed by a telegraphic account of the methods, if appropriate. Multipart figures are discouraged unless the parts are logically connected.
- Tables do not have a 'methods' section. Symbols and abbreviations in the table should be defined immediately below the table, followed by essential descriptive material, all in double-spaced text. Tables should each be presented on a separate sheet of paper.
- As a condition of publication, authors are required to make materials and methods used freely available to academic researchers for their own use. Supporting datasets must be made available at the time of publication either by deposition in the appropriate public database or by distribution on the Internet, together with the relevant accession numbers or site address. In the case of X-ray crystallographic coordinates only, public access may be delayed for up to one year after publication.
- Manuscripts can be submitted to the Editor at *Nature*, Porter's South, Crinan St, London N1 9XW or at *Nature*, 968 National Press Building, Washington, DC 20045-1938. Proofs should be returned by express mail to London.

### Other contributions

*Nature* publishes informal material in each issue, as follows.

- **Correspondence** contributions are short comments on topical issues, anecdotal material or reactions of readers to nontechnical material published in *Nature* (mainly News, Opinion, Book Review or Commentary articles). All are unsolicited; submissions by e-mail to [nature@nature.com](mailto:nature@nature.com) are preferred (accents on names and places should be clearly indicated). Contributions should be brief (fewer than 500 words).
- **Commentary** articles are informal, editorial comments on topical issues of public interest that have some bearing on scientific research. They are often controversial. Unsolicited manuscripts are considered, but enquiries can be made to the Commentary Editor by e-mail ([nature@nature.com](mailto:nature@nature.com)) or fax before formal submission as a one-page synopsis or informal letter.
- **News and Views** editorials inform nonspecialist readers about new scientific advances, either as reported in published papers or in the form of meeting reports. Most are commissioned, but proposals can be made to the News and Views Editor in advance of publication of the paper or of the meeting concerned. Authors are not allowed to discuss their own work or work from elsewhere in their laboratory. Detailed guidelines are available on request.
- **Scientific Correspondence** is for informal discussion of topical scientific issues, including material published in *Nature*. Priority is given to contributions of fewer than 500 words. Detailed guidelines are available on request. All contributions are unsolicited.
- **Book Reviews** are all commissioned by the Book Review editor. Unsolicited contributions are not considered.
- *Nature*'s editors will request final copy for Commentary, News and Views, Scientific Correspondence and Book Reviews on diskette or via e-mail.

A more detailed Guide to Authors is available on *Nature*'s www site:  
<http://www.nature.com>  
<http://www.america.nature.com>