

## Notes for contributors

*Nature* is a weekly international journal covering all the sciences. Its readership is interdisciplinary, so manuscripts should be written clearly and simply, authors remembering that English is not the first language of many readers. Competition for *Nature's* limited space is severe, so brevity is essential. *Nature's* main formats for original research are Articles and Letters to *Nature*. Lengths of these contributions are specified in terms of numbers of pages they take up. An uninterrupted page of text contains about 1,300 words, so a typical Letter to *Nature*, occupying 2 1/2 pages, can contain about 1,500 words of text and four modest-sized display items (figures and/or tables) with brief legends. There are no formal limits on the number of display items, but extra items must be accompanied by commensurate reductions in the length of the text. Length limits can, however, be varied at the editors' discretion.

Articles are reports of original scientific research whose conclusions represent a substantial advance in understanding of an important problem and are of broad general interest. They do not generally exceed 5 pages of *Nature* and have no 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 and which should not contain numbers, abbreviations or measurements unless central to the message of the paper. The first three or four paragraphs of the main text should introduce and summarize the findings. Articles have a few subheadings of not more than 45 characters each.

Letters to *Nature* are short reports of original research focused on an outstanding finding with implications of interest to nonspecialists. They should not generally exceed 2 1/2 pages of *Nature*. They have a bold first paragraph of fewer than 180 words summarizing the background, rationale, conclusion and main implication of the work, aimed particularly at nonspecialist readers. Letters should have no more than 30 references.

### Preparation of Articles and Letters

All manuscripts should be in English, typed double-spaced on one side of the paper only. Manuscripts (and revised manuscripts) should not be submitted in electronic form.

Manuscripts should be accompanied by two copies of a brief covering letter from the corresponding author, containing a full postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Articles and Letters contain a statement at the end of the text: "Correspondence and requests for materials to xxxxx", with an e-mail address if desired, followed by the accession numbers or Web site address for supporting datasets. The designated author need not be the senior author, but *Nature* will expect this author to handle matters arising from the published contribution.

Five copies of manuscripts (and revised manuscripts) and figures are required. Each copy of a revised manuscript should be accompanied by a copy of the author's response to referees' and editors' comments on the earlier version. Two copies of relevant papers by any of the authors submitted or in press elsewhere (including papers submitted elsewhere while the *Nature* manuscript is under consideration) should also be enclosed, clearly marked as such; failure to do so may prejudice consideration of the manuscript.

Titles should not exceed three lines of 28 characters each (including spaces), and should avoid numerical values, acronyms, abbreviations and punctuation wherever possible.

References should be numbered sequentially as they appear in the text, tables and figure legends. Titles of all cited articles should be provided. Only papers that have been published or submitted to a named journal should be in the reference list: manuscripts in preparation and personal communications should be mentioned in the text with a list of authors. Published conference abstracts may be included in the reference list, but text, footnotes, grant details and acknowledgements may not.

Acknowledgements must be brief and appear after the reference list. *Nature* does not publish grant or contribution numbers.

Tables should each be presented on a separate sheet of paper. Symbols and abbreviations should be defined immediately below the table, fol-

lowed by essential descriptive material, all in double-spaced text.

Figures should not be larger than 22 by 28 cm unless unavoidable, and should not contain more than one panel unless the assembled parts are logically connected. Each copy should be marked with the corresponding author's name and, when known, the manuscript reference number. One photocopy of 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. Colour figures are welcome, but a contribution towards the cost of reproduction is requested. Inability to pay this charge will not prevent *Nature* from publishing figures for which colour is essential. Once a paper is accepted for publication, electronic versions of figures are preferred.

Methods. Brief details of materials and methods can be given in the text. Otherwise, they should be described at the end of the text in a section entitled "Methods", subdivided by short, bold headings referring to the methods used. This section should not exceed 800 words and ideally should be shorter. In contributions with methods sections, figure legends should not exceed 100 words each, and should be confined to a description of the figure and the symbols used.

Materials. 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 by the authors both directly and by posting on *Nature's* Web site, by deposition in the appropriate public database or by distribution on the Internet.

Submissions. Manuscripts can be submitted to the Editor at *Nature*, Porters South, 4 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. Fax numbers and e-mail addresses for all editorial offices are on *Nature's* information page.

Presubmission enquiries for Articles and Letters should be made by e-mail to nature@nature.com, clearly labelled as such. They should include a fully referenced summary paragraph in *Nature* format, and be accompanied by a paragraph stating briefly why the submission will be of interest to a broad general scientific readership. Authors will usually receive a response within two working days of receipt.

Material submitted to *Nature* must not be discussed with the media. Accepted contributions may be discussed with the media a week before the publication date under *Nature's* embargo conditions. (See *Nature* 383, 745; 1996 for further explanation.)

### Other contributions

*Nature* publishes other contributed material as follows:

Correspondence contributions are short comments on topical issues, anecdotal material or reactions of readers to non-technical material published in *Nature*. All are unsolicited; submissions by e-mail to corres@nature.com are preferred (accents should be clearly indicated).

Commentary articles are informal editorials on topical issues of public interest that have some bearing on scientific research. They are often controversial. Unsolicited manuscripts are considered, but proposals can be made to the Commentary Editor by e-mail (nature@nature.com).

News and Views articles inform nonspecialist readers about new scientific advances, as reported either in published papers or at scientific meetings. Most are commissioned, but proposals can be made to the News and Views Editor before the paper is published or the meeting takes place. Detailed guidelines are available on request.

Scientific Correspondence contributions are brief reports of general interest, and are usually peer-reviewed. Priority is given to contributions of fewer than 500 words. Detailed guidelines are available on request. Presubmission enquiries are not considered: contributions for Scientific Correspondence should be submitted by mail, not e-mail.

Review Articles survey recent developments in a topical area of research. They should not generally occupy more than 6 pages of *Nature*.

Progress articles are shorter reviews of particularly topical and fast-moving fields. They do not exceed 4 pages of *Nature*.

Contributors wishing to submit a Review Article or Progress should first send an enquiry or a brief synopsis to the Reviews Coordinator, from whom guidelines are available on request.