



Top tips for writing for PsyPAG Quarterly by the editors of PsyPAG Quarterly

Before you start writing, you should think about the following...

1. Content

Key considerations and recommendations regarding content include having clear, logical arguments. For a detailed guide, Elsevier's Elements of Style for Writing Scientific Journal Articles is accessible here:

https://www.publishingcampus.elsevier.com/websites/elsevier_publishingcampus/files/Skills%20training/Elements_of_Style.pdf

Remember that these tips are applicable to any article type! 😊

2. Style

The Quarterly encourages postgraduates to write concisely, and to use language and style that reflects BPS and APA guidelines. For further information, the BPS Style Guide is accessible here:

http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/2015style_guide_web.pdf

3. Audience

The Quarterly cater to a range of postgraduate psychologists, who may not necessarily be expert in your specific area of work. It can be tricky to strike a balance between accessible academic language and still stay true to your key messages as the author. Some useful articles on determining your audience include:

<http://writingcommons.org/open-text/writing-processes/think-rhetorically/712-consider-your-audience> and <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/audience/>

Things to consider as you are writing...

1. Make it personal

In some cases, making the manuscript more personal can make the article much more interesting to read. For example, when doing a conference/book/software review, what was personally interesting to you? Did you learn something at the conference that you will take forward in your own work? Was there a particular chapter of the book that you found particularly relevant/helpful to your own work? If so, why? Of course, this is not applicable to some types of article that we accept, including featured articles/discussion papers and research in brief, where a scientific writing style is expected.

2. Stigmatising terms

Ensure that your writing is professional and avoid any negative or stigmatising terms. For example, terms such as “mentally ill person” should be avoided and replaced with “individuals/people with a mental illness”. As you write your article, think about how you would reflect upon it in years to come! The following published article provides a range of incorrect and inappropriate (but often extensively used) terms that you should try to avoid:

<http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01100/full>

3. Avoiding Ambiguity

Besides avoiding needless complexity, you also should avoid ambiguity in your writing. Ambiguity is created by the use of a word, phrase, or sentence that can be interpreted in more than one way. Many ambiguities in scientific writing are difficult to classify. A pronoun must refer to a single, particular noun, which acts as its antecedent. When multiple antecedents exist, the error is called an ambiguous pronoun reference. When a specific antecedent doesn't even exist, the resulting error is called a vague pronoun reference.

Avoiding ambiguous pronoun references:

Error: When Samuel dropped the goblet onto the glass table, it broke. (What broke? The table or the goblet?)

Correction: The goblet broke when Samuel dropped it onto the glass table.

Avoiding vague pronoun references:

Error: Sleeping eight hours a night is vital to students' health, yet research clearly shows they simply don't do it. (Does “it” have a specific noun serving as its antecedent?)

Correction: Although sleeping eight hours a night is vital to students' health, research clearly shows they simply don't sleep that much.

The following article provides tips and advice for avoiding ambiguity in your writing:

https://www.gvsu.edu/cms3/assets/C7078FCF-E2C3-F3DD-7F8E1630561E3F3E/avoiding_ambiguity_in_your_writing.pdf

4. Avoiding Colloquial Writing

In scholarly writing, except when reporting conversation, it is best to use standard language and to avoid colloquial language and slang. Using colloquial language can make the author and the piece sound less credible. Colloquial language is language that does not conform to the standards set by schools, media, and public institutions. It is often acceptable in everyday conversation and in fictional writing but seldom is used in formal speech or other forms of writing.

Colloquial: "contraption," "fire," "kid," "how come," and "quote"

Standard: "device," "dismiss," "child," "why," and "quotation."

The following articles provides tips and advice for avoiding colloquial writing:
http://anthroniche.com/media/pdfs/avoiding_colloquial_writing.pdf
<http://info.csp.edu/globalassets/academic-resources/writing-center/docs/colloquialism.pdf>

Finishing off...

1. Co-authors and collaboration

When writing up your research for publication in other journals, it is often the case that your supervisors and other collaborators will be co-authors who contribute to and review the manuscript before submission. Personal experience shows that this typically improves written work immensely, and therefore we highly encourage you to work with your supervisors on submissions to PsyPAG Quarterly too! Your manuscript is much more likely to be accepted if it has been reviewed by established academics and is therefore of a higher standard as a result. However, ensure you discuss whether your supervisors will be in the acknowledgements or a co-author prior to submission.

2. References

References are one of the easiest aspects of a manuscript to do, yet it is rare to receive an article that doesn't have referencing errors. Your manuscript will be returned to you if referencing errors are found, so please ensure you check them thoroughly before submitting your article. PsyPAG follows BPS house style referencing guidelines, which can be found by following the link in the second tip called "style".

Top tips for writing by the 2015/16 PsyPAG Quarterly editorial team.

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