

12.307 Writing Guidelines

	OVERALL
	Paragraphs open with the key point—BLUF (Bottom Line Up Front). (Except that the opening paragraphs may build up to the science question)
	Each paragraph is structured around a single main point
	Sentences within a paragraph use “familiar / important” structure and transitional words for coherence
	Transitions carry reader from one paragraph to the next
	Informative headings and subheadings guide the reader
	Language is precise, succinct, and professional
	A reader could skim by looking just at the Figures and Tables, and get the gist of the report, if not all the detail
	Figures and Tables are fully described in text in advance of showing them
	Figures are relatively self-contained, readable, sufficiently labeled; caption <u>underneath</u> includes Figure, #, title, statement of what it is, and sentences explaining what it means
	Tables have explanatory row and/or column headings: Table # and Title are placed <u>above</u> ; any relevant notes or citations are placed below
	Equations are set off by white space above and below; numbered at right-hand margin; variables defined in text immediately following
	Tone is professional; first-person can be used if justified (“In my three years’ experience, I have observed....”)
	Entire document has been carefully proofread (not simply spellchecked) because meticulousness >> credibility
	LITTLE ANNOYING ERRORS CHECK
	Intensifiers deleted when they don’t add substance (“very,” “extremely,” etc.)
	Punctuation correct (NB use of semicolons: “...reveals the result; however, the result is unlikely to....”)
	The word “data” is plural: data have, data are, data reveal, data suggest
	Each instance of “this” is followed by the noun to which it refers
	Hyphenate multiple words used as a modifier (“signal-to-noise ratio,” but “I measured the ratio of signal to noise”)
	“As such” always has an antecedent that answers the question “as what?” (It does not mean “therefore”)
	Number of decimal places should match the size of your error. NOT: 1.123456789 +/- 0.222222222 . YES: 1.11 +/- 0.22 1.123456789 +/- 0.222222222 is not correct. More correct would be 1.1 +/- 0.2 or 1.11 +/- 0.22 _[SEP] (depending on the science impact) Also, if <1.0, use a leading zero.
	REQUIRE (author year) citations.
	One-column format