

**Writing Tips Checklist**  
**Research Proposals, Abstracts, Handouts,**  
**PPT Presentations, Journal Articles, Theses, Grants**

**Child Language Lab 2015**

**Organization of Article/Abstract etc.**

- Look at the journal you plan to submit to. Typically:
  0. Abstract – 5-6 sentences: issue, hypothesis, how tested (num./age of subjects; procedure), results, implications.
  1. Intro/Background (including hypotheses and predictions)
  2. Method (Subjects (including how many excluded for what reasons), Stimuli, Procedure, Data Analysis/Coding)
  3. Results (test of the null hypotheses: review predictions).
  4. Discussion (not a review – but discussion of the findings, possible interpretations, theoretical/applied implications)
  5. Conclusions (brief summary and implications for the field)
  6. Acknowledgements (where you presented the paper before, anyone who helped, any funding sources)
  7. References

**Introduction/Argumentation**

- Identify the theoretical issue/problem you are addressing
- \* Review previous literature, identify the gaps, and say how you plan to fill them.
- Foreshadow ALL theoretical issues in the introduction, with relevant references.
- Order the logic in sequence: Because of X, we know Y. Expect/Predict Z.
- Identify the theoretical/clinical implications if your hypotheses are upheld.

**Presentation of the Results**

- Remember – the study is designed to evaluate your hypotheses – talk about the results with reference to this.
- Report in this order: Major effects (overall result) > minor effects (more detailed breakdown of various conditions tested).
- Include Tables with data measurements, and Figures as needed.

**Discussion/Conclusions**

- Come back to the theoretical problem and gaps outlined in the introduction
- Discuss what the results show, and possible alternative explanations/theoretical interpretations of the data.
- Identify the limitations of the study and areas for further research.
- \* Identify the theoretical/clinical implications.

**Writing Style & Organization**

- ***Be CLEAR. Present your arguments and data so that it is EASY for a non-expert to understand quickly, at a glance. If they can't they won't read further.***
- SHORT sentences.
- Use the Active rather than Passive.
- It's all right to use 'we' – though not in the abstract to a journal article.
- Be consistent with use of tense – present or past

- Be consistent in 1) use of terminology, and 2) order of discussion of phenomena, groups, etc. i.e. A then B – throughout the document
- Think of the audience you are writing for – write at the level they can understand.
- Read through a few articles in the journal you plan to submit to – it should ‘prime’ the same style in your writing.
- Check author guidelines for the specific journal you are submitting to.
- Use full reference at first mention; subsequently use et al. if 3 or more authors.
- No numerals at beginning of a sentence. ( \* 12 subjects were tested...)
- Report full statistic in text/table. P values are fine under Figures, with \* , \*\*.

### **Spell Check – and Proofread!**

Then, let the paper sit for at least a day, and read it through again and make further modifications before sending it on others. **Spell Check after additional modifications.**

### **Finally, please note that *Good Writing Takes Time***

This is especially true if you haven’t had much experience with the particular genre you are writing. And it is even more so if you are not a native speaker of English. You will need to revise MANY times. This means that, before ANY deadline, you will need to have a complete draft of what you are writing, and then be prepared for many rounds of revision.

If you want feedback from others, you will also need to allow time for them to read the document you send and to make comments. Please keep in mind that others have a full workload: they will be squeezing in a review of your work whenever they can – even at midnight. This is also true for any external reviewer of your work, be it an abstract for a conference, a journal article, or your thesis.

So – keep all these audiences in mind as you write, and make things systematic and clear for your reader. Remember, you know much more about what you did than anyone else. The challenge is to make it clear exactly what you did, so that someone else can replicate it. You may have done brilliant work, and have great results. But if you can’t explain it clearly to others, and why it is brilliant, no one will ever know.

Happy Writing!

KD