

Scrutiny of the Writing Process

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We have a good problem: Multiple Papers are ‘maturing’

1. Baiyuan
2. Andrew
3. Maria:
4. Gang
5. Will
6. Ruarri
7. Insun Song

Peter needs to write
a book and publish 2
papers this year

1. In process:
 1. Yao (8 hours)
 2. Derek Sawyer (30 hours)
 3. Amy Adams (40 hours)
 4. Michael Merrell (40 hours)
 5. Baiyuan (20 hours)

Writing is really really hard

There must be some tools we can apply in this difficult process

This is like doing push-ups. If you practice you get better. One is not born a writer or not a writer



Writing: a multi-scale problem

- Large Scale
 - What is your story?
- Meso-Scale
 - Abstract
 - Introduction
- Micro-Scale
 - Carving paragraphs
- Nano-Scale
 - Punction, grammar, rules, etc.

What is your story?

- What is the story you are trying to tell.
 - We spend an unbelievable amount of effort on this. To me this is the majority of what writing a paper is. I think many people have it in their mind that when you write a paper you know your story and now you are just telling something that exists. In my group, nearly always (always?) the story evolves in the writing. That is ok and appropriate. However, sometimes people come to me and say...I can't do this as it is 'new research' and we are writing up what is already done.

Thesis

- You need to be able to state your thesis:
 - What is it you are trying to support or prove.

Visualisation

- When I am brushing my teeth, I stare at the mirror and I try to conceptualize
 - in short bullet points the structure of my story.
 - What the key important things are.
 - I try to 'see' my paper

Visualisation

- Visualization is an often-taught mental rehearsal technique in sports. It is an extremely powerful tool and numerous studies have been done to test this. You may have heard of this basketball study or a different one with similar results.
- A study conducted by Dr. Blaslotto at the University of Chicago was done where he split people into three groups and tested each group on how many free throws they could make.
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- After this, he had the first group practice free throws every day for an hour.
- The second group just visualized themselves making free throws.
- The third group did nothing.
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- After 30 days, he tested them again.
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- The first group improved by 24%.
- The second group improved by 23% without touching a basketball!!!!
- The third group did not improve which was expected.
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- Read more: <http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com/mental/visualization.html#ixzz2SpRtH260>
- <http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com/mental/visualization.html>

Meso-scale Abstract

GEOLOGICAL NOTES

A SCRUTINY OF THE ABSTRACT, II¹

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ABSTRACT

A partial biography of the writer is given. The inadequate abstract is discussed. What should be covered by an abstract is considered. The importance of the abstract is described. Dictionary definitions of "abstract" are quoted. At the conclusion a revised abstract is presented.

For many years I have been annoyed by the inadequate abstract. This became acute while I was serving a term as editor of the *Bulletin* of The American Association of Petroleum Geologists. In addition to returning manuscripts to authors for rewriting of abstracts, I also took 30 minutes in which to lower my ire by writing, "A Scrutiny of the Abstract."¹ This little squib has

listens to your entire paper, from 10 to 500 will read the abstract.

If you are presenting a paper before a learned society, the abstract alone may appear in a pre-convention issue of the society journal as well as in the convention program; it may also be run by trade journals. The abstract which accompanies a published paper will most certainly reappear in

Meso-scale Abstract

The reader is told what the paper is about, but not what it contributes. Such abstracts are merely overgrown titles. They are produced by writers who are either (1) beginners, (2) lazy, or (3) have not written the paper yet.

To many writers the preparation of an abstract is an unwanted chore required at the last minute by an editor or insisted upon even before the paper has been written by a deadline-bedeveled program chairman. However, in terms of market reached, the abstract is *the most important part of the paper*. For every individual who reads or

My dictionary describes an abstract as “a summary of a statement, document, speech, etc. . . .” and that which *concentrates in itself the essential information* of a paper or article. The definition I prefer has been set in italics. May all writers learn the art (it is not easy) of preparing an abstract containing the *essential information* in their compositions. With this goal in mind, I append an abstract that should be an improvement over the one appearing at the beginning of this discussion.

ABSTRACT

The abstract is of utmost importance, for it is read by 10 to 500 times more people than hear or read the entire article. It should not be a mere recital of the subjects covered. Expressions such as “is discussed” and “is described” should *never* be included! The abstract should be a condensation and concentration of the *essential information* in the paper.

Meso Scale-Introduction

- **THE BODY OF AN INTRODUCTION**
- My formula for an introduction is a sequence of three parts. They are (1) the review, (2) the claim, and (3) the agenda.
- **The review**
- Pick out about 3-10 papers providing a background to your research and say something about each of them. You could paraphrase a sentence or two from each abstract. The review is not intended to be a historical review going back to Newton or Descartes. Try to find a few papers by your office mates, your advisor, your predecessors, or other associates. That way you might find somebody to give you helpful criticism!
- Anyone can follow these instructions and write a review that *looks* presentable. Where intelligence and skill are required is in organizing the review so that it leads up to something, namely, to your *claim*.
- **The claim**
- The most important part of the introduction is buried in the middle. It is the *claim*. The claim is where you claim your work is a worthwhile extension of the review you just wrote. If someone says your writing is "unmotivated," they are not insulting your humanity; it just means they can't find your claim.
- In your claim you should use the personal pronoun "I" (or "we" if you aren't the sole author). The word "I" tells people where common knowledge runs out and your ideas begin. If you are writing a doctoral dissertation or an article for a refereed journal, then you should be making a new contribution to existing knowledge. Your paper is *not acceptable* without an identifiable claim.
- **The agenda**
- An agenda is found at the end of many introductions. It summarizes what you will show the reader as your paper progresses. Your agenda will be dull if it is merely a recital of the topics you will cover. Your agenda should tell how your paper works to fulfill your claim. In this way your agenda should clarify your claim.
- The agenda is not as important as the review and the claim. Keep it short.
- Occasionally you will be fortunate enough to be writing about something in which some of your conclusions can be made in simple statements. If so, state them early, right after your agenda. You aren't trying to write a mystery! Many more people will *begin* reading your paper than will *finish* reading it. Motivate them to finish! Unfortunately, many technical papers do not lend themselves to early conclusions.

<http://sepwww.stanford.edu/sep/prof/Intro.html>

Micro-scale:

What I think about when I write:

- Carve words.
- Take the shortest cleanest line
- Carve sentences
- Do it again and again and again
- You should be able to continue to improve your paper and until you can, you can't stand on your own.



Micro-scale Carving

- Version 5
 - ~~The water depth at Site U1402 is 639 m and . In in~~ The water depth at Site U1402 is 639 m and . In in this region the continental slope is smooth, draped by sediments from the Hudson apron. During ODP Leg 174A, APC cores were taken to refusal at 215 meters. Sediments encountered at ODP Site 1073 within the first 200 mbsf were dominated by silty clay ([Shipboard Scientific Party, 1998](#)).
- Version 8
 - At Site U 1402, the continental slope is smooth, draped by sediments from the Hudson apron, and the water depth is 639 m. During ODP Leg 174A, APC cores were taken to 215 mbsf (meters below sea floor). Sediments within the first 200 mbsf were dominated by silty clay ([Shipboard Scientific Party, 1998](#)).

Nano-scale

- Punctuation, grammar, etc.
 - I'm not particularly good at this. Best thing to do is read a writing book and then keep reading it.



Get a book.
Read the book.
LOOK at the examples.
See how they carve sentences

<http://www.ig.utexas.edu/people/staff/flemings/>

Writing Help

[Procedure for Submitting a Publication](#)

[Using group digital library for publications & references](#)

Presentations:

[Tips for a good talk](#)

Help with Abstracts:

[A Scrutiny of the Abstract by Kenneth Landes](#)

[A Scrutiny of the Abstract II by Kenneth Landes](#)

[Scrutiny of the introduction by Jon Claerbout](#)

[Word -> Figure Linking for GeoFluids Abstracts](#)

Help with mathematics and equations:

[General Help \(.pdf\)](#)

[SI Units in expressing geologic time - IUGS recommendations \(.pdf\)](#)

General Writing Tips:

[The Science of Scientific Writing](#)

[Writing for the AAPG Bulletin, we're not literary giants, but we can try to be](#)

[Strategies for Helping Graduate Students Overcome Writing Challenges](#)

Writing Tips for Resumes and Cover Letters :

[Excerpts from Joe Schall's book](#). Chapter 7: resumes and Chapter 8: cover letters.

We have a reputation for well-written papers

- If you have a reputation for well written papers
 - People will read your papers
 - People will have a positive outlook when they review your paper
 - People will continue to read your paper in the year's ahead.

Response to Reviews

- We do everything we can to respond to reviews
- We document in a cover letter and in appendices exactly how we met (or did not meet) the criticism of the reviewers
- We are polite and professional at all times.

Learn to help each other



Top 10

1. Read Scrutiny of the Abstract. If you don't write your abstract that way...have a damn good reason why not. Save us both a lot of time and energy.
2. Read 'Scrutiny of the Introduction.' Ask yourself if you've met this description. If you haven't, then rewrite.
3. Have a peer review it. If there are only a few pen marks and your friend says it looks good....then you know that person is not a friend.
4. Be ready with your elevator speech. If you don't have your elevator speech, that's ok...but work on it.
5. Return, by yourself, to your paper multiple times and carve, carve, carve.

Summer Schedule

- June 3-7—D.C. Hydrates Meeting
- June 17-26—Japan and San Francisco
- July 1-Aug. 13—Woods Hole Oceanographic Observatory
 - Will be working every day.
 - Adobe Connect is our friend