

Some Suggestions to Improve Efficiency in Manuscript Preparation

- General project “set up”
 - Constrain studies to a specific, well articulated objective
 - e.g. test a particular hypothesis or gather a particular dataset
 - Analyze/synthesize your results from the perspective/context of your objective

- Preparing to write
 - You should have a focused, but likely diverse, suite of compiled/organized results
 - e.g. rough figures, tables, graphs etc.
 - Sort these results into **key findings**, **minor results**, and **null results**
 - Based on your key findings and project objective, summarize the important results of your project in one or two sentences.
 - This is your manuscript thesis statement
 - Identify which of your rough figures, tables etc. best illustrate the thesis of your manuscript.

- Identify any minor or null results that are critical to supporting your key findings
 - If none, set all of these aside
 - If there are such, does their representation require additional figures, tables etc.?
- At this point you should have
 - A 1 – 2 sentence statement of the project objective
 - A 1 – 2 sentence summary of your key findings
 - A collection of key figures, tables etc.
 - Any supporting, secondary, figures, tables etc.

- Outline your manuscript

- Introduction

- Should contain the bare minimum background necessary to understand your findings and their importance.
 - Include a limited suite of seminal and current references.
 - Avoid the temptation to review your entire field

- Methods

- Limit to specifically what you did.
 - Methods should be sufficient for reproducibility and to instill confidence in the quality/verity of your findings.
 - Methods need not cover techniques you did not use, your opinions of them etc.

– Results

- Your key figures, tables etc.
- Any necessary supporting figures, tables, etc.
- Limited supporting text
- Show only those results that are critically relevant to your key findings
- Avoid including additional material just because you have it

– Discussion

- Should focus tightly on explaining your key findings in the context of your study objective and your methods/
experimental design

– Conclusions

- Brief synopsis of your entire manuscript
- Include an extension of your findings to the broader history/
context of your study's objective

- Golden Rule
 - The tighter your manuscript/story is, the easier the paper will be to write and the easier it will be to read.
- Most of the bullet points outlined here can be accomplished as a single task. It is often easier to work one task at a time.
- Writing can be a bigger task, but completing one manuscript section at a time can make it easier to get started, keep writing, and make the most of 30 minutes here and 10 minutes there.