Subject: SERCC Newsletter
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From: Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core
To: Widmayer, Heather A

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Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

Tips for Editing Your Own Research Article or Grant Proposal

We are often asked by researchers, “How do I edit my own manuscript or grant proposal? What should I look for when making revisions?”

These are great questions! Editing a manuscript or a grant proposal can seem

daunting—particularly for a document that you've written or for one involving multiple contributors. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Take a break from your writing.

The first thing we suggest when editing your own work is to take a few days off from writing before you start editing. When you are very familiar with the writing, it can be difficult to be objective and see where edits might be needed. Editing a document after a short break allows you to approach it with fresh eyes and an open mind.

Look for consistency of formatting.

Consistent formatting gives your document a neat, cohesive appearance and improves readability. It is especially important to edit for formatting when more than one author has contributed to the document.

Check for consistent use of

- font face and font size,
- line spacing,
- paragraph indentation,
- paragraph alignment (i.e., left aligned vs. justified),
- formatting for emphasized text,
- headings and subheadings, and
- capitalization in headings.

Check for consistency in figures and tables.

Consistency is also important in figures, figure legends, and tables, because it provides readers with familiarity in how the information is presented and allows them to focus on the content.

- Make sure each figure legend is structured and formatted consistently: look at how the figure titles are written and how panel letters are formatted.
- Make sure that all references to figures within the text are written using the same style (e.g., Figure 1, Fig 1, or Fig. 1).
- Make sure that all figure references in the text correctly match the intended figures and panels, that all figure panels are referenced in the text, and that each figure panel is described in the legend.
- Format table column and row headers consistently, and check for consistent use of capitalization and abbreviations within and across tables.

Look for consistent use of terminology, nomenclature, abbreviations, and symbols.

To avoid possible confusion, make sure terms are used consistently throughout the document. This is especially important for collaborative writing projects, where each

person might use a slightly different term to describe the same thing.

- To define abbreviations, write out the term where it is first used and immediately follow it with the abbreviation in parentheses. From that point forward use the abbreviation consistently in the rest of the document or grant proposal component (e.g., Specific Aims page, Research Strategy, etc.).
- Look for inconsistencies in the use of abbreviations, for example, where a term might be written out in some parts of the document but abbreviated in others. Be sure to either write out the term or use the defined abbreviation consistently throughout the document.
- Make sure that the nomenclature used to describe experimental models (e.g., animal models, cell lines, viruses) is consistent throughout the main text, figures, figure legends, and tables.
- Decide whether to italicize Latin terms or not and use the selected formatting consistently. It is not necessary to italicize common Latin terms that are found in the dictionary (e.g., “in vitro” and “in vivo”), but it is also fine to italicize them.
- Make sure mathematical and statistical symbols (e.g., *p* value) are written and formatted consistently.
- Make sure that units of time (e.g., seconds, days, min., hrs.) are either written out or abbreviated consistently and that the format of the abbreviations is the same. For example, if “minutes” is abbreviated as “min,” then “seconds” should be abbreviated as “sec” rather than “s.”

Review for grammar and mechanics.

- Check for errors in the use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. For example, check for subject-verb agreement and missing commas in lists.
- Make sure that parallel sentence structure is used—particularly for long, complex sentences.
- Look for long sentences that introduce more than one idea. Sometimes it is best to split this type of sentence into two sentences.

Ask for feedback about clarity and flow.

- Ask for feedback from someone who is not closely familiar with your research (e.g., a colleague, friend, or family member). Ask them to point out sections of text that are confusing or where more information might be needed.
- If possible, ask for feedback from more than one person. If you find that multiple people mark the same sections as confusing, then these are areas that should probably be revised.

Create a style guide.

- For collaborative writing projects, consider creating a style guide that is shared with the team before writing begins (e.g., a simple document that lists all applicable terms, nomenclature, abbreviations, symbols, and formatting styles).
- Implementing a style guide at the start of a project will not only help each person write their portion of the document more easily, but it will also save time during editing and revising.
- Before creating a style guide, check the instructions provided by the journal or funding agency to make sure that your style guide reflects any formatting requirements.

We hope these editing tips are helpful for your next writing project. If you have any questions about editing or have other tips to share, feel free to contact us.

Good luck with your editing!
Heather Widmayer and the SERCC team

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Announcements

Website for Large-Scale Proposal Development Service (LSPDS) is now online.

The LSPDS supports CCOM faculty and staff in preparing, writing, and submitting complex, large-scale grant proposals, with the goal of reducing the administrative burden and enhancing the competitiveness of these applications. It specializes in major funding mechanisms including NIH institutional training grants (T32), NIH complex grants (e.g., P-, U-, and S-series), and other large collaborative initiatives (e.g., ARPA-H).

New NIH fellowship parent announcements for FORMS-I instructions are now available.

After a few months' delay, changes to NIH fellowship applications recently went into effect, just in time for the August 8 application deadline. A summary of changes to fellowship applications and links to the new FORMS-I instructions can be accessed by clicking on the link above.

Upcoming Opportunities

Have a question about writing grants or research articles? Contact us and we will answer it in a future newsletter.

Maximizing Pivot to Find Funding and Collaborators
July 30 | 1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m. | In person
Do you want to minimize your time spent searching for funding opportunities or potential project collaborators? Join us either virtually or in person to learn how Pivot can save you time and effort in identifying the right funding opportunities for your research, as well as identifying collaborators with the relevant expertise.
Registration

G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation: Mathers Grant Program
Limited Submission | Internal Deadline: August 7
The Foundation has primarily supported basic science, ideally with potential translational applications. The Foundation now also embraces innovative translational research proposals. Past areas of research support include immunology, the microbiome, genomics, structural biology, cellular physiology, neuroscience, and others. Covid-19-related research projects (aims or sub-aims) will not be considered for support.
Sponsor LOI Deadline: October 3
Sponsor Deadline: December 12 (by invitation only)
Limited Submission Application

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Exploring Equitable Futures Program
Application deadline: October 15
The Exploring Equitable Futures Program, previously called Pioneering Ideas for an Equitable Future, has several goals: Economic Inclusion for Family Wellbeing, Equitable and Accountable Public Health and Healthcare Systems, and Healthy and Equitable Community Conditions. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis until October 15, 2025.
More Information and Application

The NIH is accepting applications to the Rare Diseases Clinical Research Consortia (U54).
Application deadline: October 16
This program aims to invite new and renewal applications for the Rare Diseases Clinical Research Consortia (RDCRC) that comprise the Rare Diseases Clinical Research Network. The RDCRC are intended to advance and improve diagnosis, management, and treatment of numerous rare diseases through highly collaborative, multi-site, patient-centric, translational, and clinical research. Special emphasis will be placed on the early and timely identification of individuals with rare diseases and clinical trial readiness.
More Information

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