

Technical Writing Workshop Series

Steven D. Aird

2. Writing Introductions to Scientific Manuscripts

Graduate Students (2nd Year+), Post-Docs, Technicians, and Professors (20 participants)

Friday, 14 July, 2017 (13:00-17:00)

- 30-minute presentation (or less) regarding how to write an appropriate Introduction to a manuscript, and also how to use GoogleDocs and Paperpile. This will be done 4 weeks before the workshop itself.
- Before the workshop, participants will find in the literature what they regard as a good Introduction and if possible, a poor one. They will assess the strengths or weaknesses of each and Steve Aird will select some participants to present their critiques to the workshop.
- Participants will write an Introduction to a manuscript that they are writing or planning to write. Students may do this for a subject in which they are interested, as if they were going to write a manuscript or a grant proposal about that topic. This will actually be very good practice for writing Introductions to their theses or thesis proposals. They may even want to use their thesis topics.
 - Introductions will be written in GoogleDocs using the free reference manager, Paperpile. When finished, they can be downloaded in Word format. Subsequent editing will employ either Word or Pages.
 - These Introductions should target a general scientific audience, rather than other scientists in the same narrow specialty. They should be 900 - 1,500 words, single-spaced, in a 12-point font.
 - Participants will perform a thorough literature review beforehand and will summarize the state of the field in such a way as to help the reader understand why the current or proposed research is being done. That is, the reader should be able to understand the study's potential scientific value.
- Participants will exchange Introductions (Steve will arrange this) within small groups that will be composed so as to have people from different fields working together. The objective is to have participants addressing those who are not of their specialties, to provide a genuine critique of how well they communicated to a broader audience. A week after the workshop, revised Introductions will be submitted.

Workshop Schedule

Thursday, 10 August

- An introductory presentation to writing Introductions to scientific manuscripts and to using GoogleDocs and Paperpile will be given. (13:00 - 13:30). It may not require the full 30 minutes.

Friday, 08 September, by 17:00

- Participants will submit examples of Introductions from the literature to Steve Aird (steven.aird@oist.jp) with a brief description of why their selections are well-done or poorly done. If the latter, participants should indicate what the Introduction lacked or what could be done to improve it. This should be a careful critique, as if participants were reviewing a manuscript submitted for publication.
- Steve will distribute these to other participants for discussion during the workshop.
- Participants should also submit their own Introductions in Word format so that Steve can group and distribute them.

- Participants will be asked to critique the Introductions of up to four other participants who will be members of the same group. This can be accomplished in Word or Pages, using Track Changes, but for compatibility, returned versions should be in Word. Sorry!

Friday, 22 September, Workshop Schedule

13:00 - 14:45 Presentation of Introductions from the literature

14:45 - 15:00 Break

15:00 - 16:00 Group work on individual Introductions. Group members will assess each of the Introductions, highlighting features that they found well done and suggesting possible points for improvement. This is not an obligation to find fault. If something is well written, so that anyone can understand, there may be no suggestions for improvement. Suggestions should be given to help the author, not to criticize! Then participants will revise their Introductions in light of the critiques they received from their peers.

Friday, 29 September, Final Assignment

- Participants will submit the final versions of their Introductions after revising them, and they will submit their written critiques of the Introductions of others in their work groups. They will also fill out an anonymous online evaluation of the workshop to help Dr. Aird improve future workshops.