

Scientific Writing Workshop

Strategies for Writing Clearly and Publishing Research That Matters

FPIK, Universitas Padjadjaran,
October 2026

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Format: Two-day intensive workshop

Workshop goal

The goal of this workshop is to help early-career researchers develop their current research into a clear and compelling scientific paper suitable for submission to an international journal.

This will be a **working workshop**. Instead of spending most of our time listening to presentations about scientific writing, we will work directly with our own research, figures, ideas, and writing. Participants will discuss their research with one another, receive feedback, and revise their ideas throughout the two days. All participants, myself included, will help each other in this regard.

Clear scientific thinking comes before polished English. Our emphasis will be on identifying the scientific story, communicating important results clearly, and writing with the reader in mind. These aspects are highlighted in a useful book I regularly use (see below).

Pre-workshop preparation

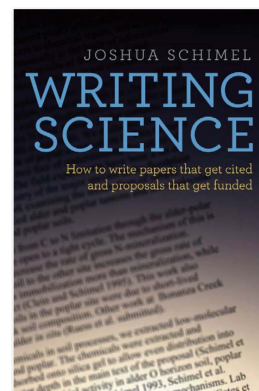
1. Reading. Please read Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3–15) of Joshua Schimel's *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded* (Oxford University Press, 2012). These chapters introduce two ideas that will guide our workshop: why scientists write and how scientific writing can be understood as storytelling.

Book citation: Schimel, J. (2012). *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*. Oxford University Press.

Online resource: [Joshua Schimel's Writing Science website](#)

As you read, please mark:

- ! — ideas you find useful or interesting;
- ? — something you do not understand or are not sure you agree with; and
- → — an idea you could apply to your own paper.



NOTE: You do **not** need to understand every English expression in the reading. Concentrate on the ideas about how scientists communicate their research. Come prepared to discuss one !, one ?, and one → with the group.

2. Bring your research. Please choose **one research project** that you are developing for submission to an international journal article. Ideally, this should be a project for which you have already completed at least some data analysis. It is **not necessary** to have a manuscript draft - that is what we are working on!

3. Bring your figure(s). Please bring the figures and/or tables that you think could form the basis of your paper. At minimum, bring **one important figure** that contains a result you would like to communicate.

For that figure, come prepared to answer three questions:

1. What question does this figure answer?
2. What is the most important result shown in the figure?
3. Why does this result matter?

Do not worry if your figures are not yet publication quality. **Work in progress is encouraged.** We will use these materials to develop and test the scientific story of your paper.

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Day 1: Finding the scientific story

Goal: Discover the paper you have to write.

We will consider the idea of scientific writing as **storytelling**, drawing on Joshua Schimel's *Writing Science*. Using our own research, we will work on identifying:

- What is the scientific problem, and what is already known?
- What remains unknown, and why does that gap matter?
- What did you do to address the problem?
- What did you discover?
- Why does your result matter to the reader?

We will use our own research figures to explore how data become a scientific argument. By the end of Day 1, each participant should be able to state the **central message of the paper** and outline the scientific story connecting the principal figures.

Day 2: Building the paper

Goal: Turn the scientific story into the structure of a publishable manuscript.

We will develop the story identified on Day 1 into the major components of a scientific paper: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Figures. We will consider how to communicate complex science in clear, direct English and how to write with an international scientific audience in mind. We will also discuss journal selection, peer review, revision, and the process of preparing a manuscript for submission.

By the end of Day 2, each participant will hopefully have a **paper blueprint** that can be used to begin, or substantially revise, a manuscript.

Our working principle

Write clearly. Tell the Scientific story. Publish research that matters. The purpose of our practice of scientific writing is not to make the science sound complicated. It is to make the scientific argument clear. Come prepared to **read, write, discuss, question, revise, and work on your own science**. I look forward to working with you.