

An edited version of the presentation given at EUROSON 2013, Stuttgart

English phrases that should be avoided in manuscripts – but are often not

Ten tips from an Editor of *Ultraschall in der Medizin* – European Journal of Ultrasound

1. **For articles written in English remember the Campaign for 'plain English'**

Charming and quaint language is redundant – Henceforth, Thus, Hence Before – The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends a half hour or more of moderate physical activity on most days, preferably every day. The activity can include brisk walking, calisthenics, home care, gardening, moderate sports exercise, and dancing.

After – Do at least 30 minutes of exercise, like brisk walking, most days of the week.

2. **No forbidden words or expressions should be used but the article should be well written and consistent with the core material assessed**

But beware of double meanings.

3. **The flow of the article should be apparent**

Each sentence should lead to the next and each paragraph is self contained.

4. **To produce a learned and structure article avoid words that may introduce bias**

'Puffery' (Peacock terms) Words that are used to promote the subject without imparting or summarizing verifiable information, for example, Acclaimed, Outstanding, Leading, Renowned, Remarkable, Prestigious, Landmark, World-class

'We have demonstrated the potential of this technique that could alter radiological practice to the benefit of patient care.' Do not make unprovable proclamations about the importance of your work; stick to the facts and attributions to demonstrate their importance and let the reader decide.

5. **Avoid unsupported attributions**

'Weasel words' are vague attributions, where a statement is dressed with authority with appearance of support but denies the reader the source of the viewpoint. This disguises a biased view for example, Many workers believe, It is accepted opinion, Research

has shown, It is widely accepted, Experts agree

Claims should be attributed.

6. **Avoid expressions of doubt**

'Doubting' words are words that imply that a given point is inaccurate for example, Supposed, Apparent, Purported, So-called.

Punctuation may also be incorrectly used to imply that the author is distancing themselves from a common interpretation.

7. **Avoid clichés and idioms in favour of direct and literal expressions**

For example, Take the plunge, At the end of the day, Tip of the iceberg, We kept our focus, A good rule of thumb, At the cutting edge, Draw the Line Before – We kept our focus, and at the end of the day, with a wind in our sails, and luck on our side, we pulled out all the stops, drew the line and finished in the nick of time.

After – The study was completed in the required time.

8. **Relative time references**

The preference is to be more specific

with statements, vague time periods are not useful for example, Recently, Lately, Currently, Presently, To date, Formerly

9. **Editorializing**

The need to highlight something as particularly significant or certain should maintain an impartial tone. Notably, Interestingly, It should be noted, Actually, Clearly, Without doubt, Essentially

10. **Abbreviations**

Explain each abbreviation before using the term and do not litter your manuscript with abbreviations. Do not invent abbreviations, use established abbreviations.

And finally to summarise

- ▶ Think carefully as you write, do not use 'jargon'
- ▶ Write in plain English, longer sentences are not better
- ▶ Avoid self aggrandisement
- ▶ Stick to the facts, do not embellish the work
- ▶ Avoid clichés and 'invented' abbreviations
- ▶ Get someone else to read the manuscript – they will pick out the 'clangers'

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