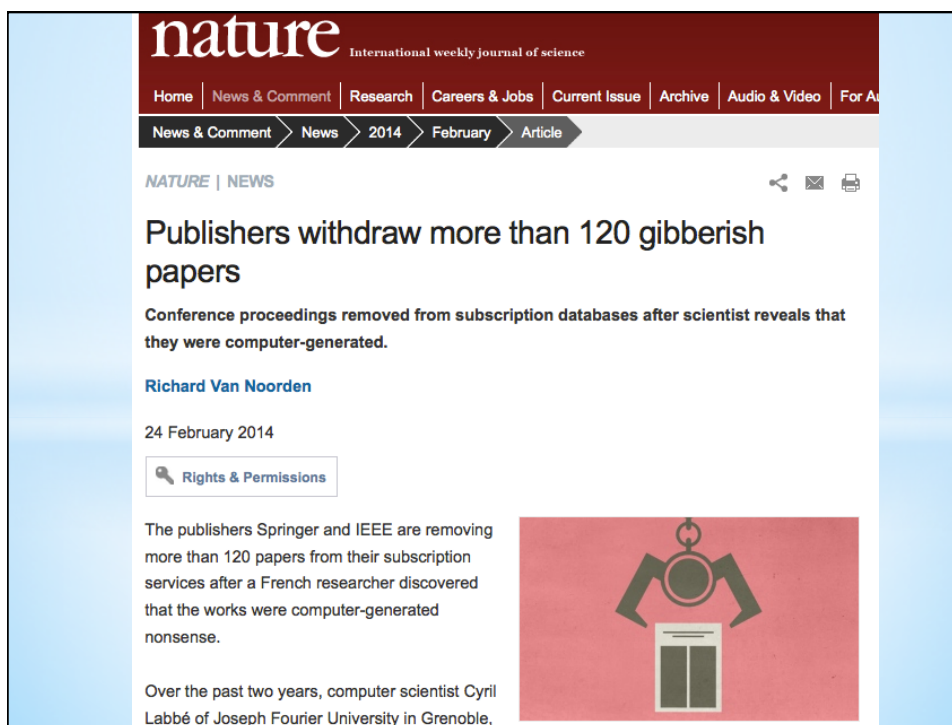


# Learning to Speak Scholar

## *Tips on Academic Editing*

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eDitmore Editorial Services



Clearly, academic writers **need** editors!

But how can nonspecialists help cut through this jargon jungle?

#### Four Points to Understand

- Why academics write
- Why academics write the way they do
- What you can do as an editor
- What you should NOT do as an editor

## Defining My Terms

**Academic writing:** *books, articles, papers, reports by scholars and graduate students*

**Academic or scholar:** *Writers with advanced degrees, especially those who make their living teaching in institutions of higher learning.*

**NOTE:** The information in this presentation is based on my experience working with scholars in the humanities and social science fields—not those in medical or “hard” sciences.

## Why Academics Write

Explore ideas

Stimulate discussion

Report on research

*Publication is a huge component in hiring and promotion decisions in most colleges and universities in the U.S.*

*Publication in English is increasingly important for scholars in other countries as well.*

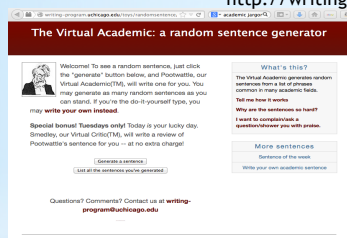
## Why Academics Write the Way They Do

1. They are not given to believing that the attribute of conciseness is one that necessarily deserves high regard in their own prose.
2. They know that someone is constantly looking over their shoulder, evaluating, critiquing, probing for flaws. So, they must spend a lot of words explaining what they are *not* going to write about or pointing out all the flaws in their own studies.
3. They assume their audience will be specialists too and often get into trouble when asked to write something for nonspecialized audiences.
4. They are not professional writers.
5. They are often distracted and interrupted writers.
6. They get lost in their own words sometimes.

### The Virtual Academic: A Random Sentence Generator

from the University of Chicago Writing Program

<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/toys/randomsentence/>



***"The fantasy of the gendered body is conducive to the disintegration of difference."***

"So what accounts for the difficulty of the sentences, even when the words themselves are familiar? ... We think the answer lies in the way the sentences express action. ... **When too many of a sentence's actions are expressed as nouns, then their effects start catching up with readers. Readers can feel as if they are caught in a vague, timeless world where concepts mysteriously interact with no intervention from actual human beings.**

The good news is that writers can take control of their prose. When abstract nouns are vital to a sentence's meaning, they belong in the sentence. But if some of them might just as well be expressed as verbs, then the writer can convert them -- some of them, not all of them -- to verbs."

## What Can Editors Do?

Details, details, details

- Do tables and text match up?
- Are all tables, figures consistently labeled?
- Are page numbers, running heads, titles, etc., consistent?
- Are all works cited in text listed in documentation and vice versa?
- Are names and key terms spelled consistently?

## What Can Editors Do?

*continued*

- Grammar, punctuation, style
- Vocabulary—particularly for ESL writers
- Untangle sentences, cause and effect
- Provide basic formatting, such as hanging indents, italic instead of underlining
- Query if something seems wrong
- Offer help “translating” for nonspecialist audiences

### What Editors Should *Not* Try to Do

- Judge the merits of the argument, unless you are an recognized expert in the field
- Eliminate *all* jargon, passive voice
- Cut much of the text, unless you have been asked to do so
- Make substantial changes without querying or double-checking similar sources

### How Do You Work with a PhD?

Approach with respect—a little deference never hurts.

Ask—don't tell.

Be ready to explain changes without getting combative.

Be professional.



## How Do You Work with a PhD?

*continued*

Don't be surprised if author misses deadlines, forgets details.

Don't expect the author to really understand how to use Microsoft Word.

Prove your worth. Query about something small to prove you're paying attention and that you can save the writer some embarrassment.

## What Do You Need to Know?

**Style guides:** Most-often used guides in humanities and social sciences are Chicago, American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Turabian (mostly for students)

**Pay special attention to:**

- Citation styles (footnotes vs. in-text references)
- Bibliography/References/Works Cited
- Number style
- Ellipses, hyphens, punctuation
- Block quotations

## What Do You Need to Know?

*continued*

### Basic formatting, such as how to handle:

- Indents
- Page numbers
- Subheads
- Footnotes
- Bibliographies

*Many academics will know **nothing** about these features, and will be very happy for any help you can provide in these areas.*

## Learning a Citation Style

Learn basic formats for:

- book
- entry in an edited book
- journal
- web citation

For notes or bibliography, figure out how to deal with:

- Author's name
- Name of book
  - OR* name of article/chapter and full publication
- Publisher details, including publisher location
- Year of publication
- Page numbers involved in selection



## Learning a Citation Style

*continued*

How are author names handled—initials or spelled out?

First name first or last name first?

What punctuation is used between the different elements: commas, periods, none?

Where is the year of publication placed and how is it punctuated?

How are page numbers handled?

How are in-text citations handled if they are not footnoted?

## Where Do You Find Academic Editing Work?

Graduate students

Academic publishers, particularly journals and book packagers

Offer services to professors, individuals

Look for ESL students and professors—many of them really need editing help to publish in English-language publications

## Where Do You Find Academic Editing Work?

*continued*

Check with grad schools to see if they maintain an editing resource list

Approach academic publishers—particularly look for journals packagers; (be prepared to take editing tests for these first two categories)

Join EFA; the job list often includes academic editing jobs

Advertise in campus publications or on campus billboards

Don't forget that word of mouth is key—and free

## Resources

AP vs. Chicago: [www.apvschicago.com](http://www.apvschicago.com)

Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide:  
[www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Online Style Books (links to number of different style books):  
[www.onlinestylebooks.com](http://www.onlinestylebooks.com)

American Psychological Assn. style tips:  
[www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx](http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx)

How to Learn a Style Guide in 10 Days (Coleen Barry):  
<http://askcopycurmudgeon.com/resources/>

Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>

Editorial Freelancers Association: <http://www.the-efa.org>

Copyeditors' Knowledge Base: <http://www.kokedit.com/ckb.php>