



From the Editor

For heavy-duty use

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Reader in focus

For high wear and tear. A good article is like a heavy-duty machine: strong, simple and contains all that is needed, but nothing more. Citations and journal impact factors are only a vague mirage reflecting the value of a research. Convenient though, as they can be quantified without reading the article. However, the ultimate value of a publication is measured in use. This means that we must think of the user in every line of our text.

The reader is the user. Our research articles are open for all. Forest sciences are a collection of many disciplines dealing somehow with forest or forestry including natural sciences, social sciences, economics, engineering and humanities. When writing an article, we do not know who will read it. The article must be written so that it is understandable for a wide range of educated readers. This has consequences on the way we write.

Clarity. Research can be consumed in many ways. A light-consumer may read only conclusions to build policy briefs or management outlines. A more demanding consumer compiles critical reviews for deeper understanding, or quantitative meta-analyses for larger perspectives. Someone looks for one specific detail. A black-belt number-nerd extracts tables, functions and parameter estimates to be used as building blocks for mathematical models of reality. All readers value clarity, and the clarity begins from the basic building blocks, terms.

Simple is beautiful

Clean terms. The wastewater theorem says that if you add a spoonful of wine into a barrel of wastewater, you get a barrel of wastewater; and if you add a spoonful of wastewater into a barrel of wine, again you get a barrel of wastewater. Similarly, in scientific text mixing or confusing terms is a bad idea. It contaminates the text. Consistent use of well defined, clean terms with units keeps the text hygienic. The value of clean terms cannot be over-estimated.

Heavy-duty components. The presented results must be reproducible. Open science has made reproduction a part of everyday research. This has increased the quality requirements for the aims -section, and for the materials and methods -section. These sections deserve rethinking, rewriting and rephrasing whilst continuously bearing in mind the reader. Reiteration should continue until these sections are clear, strong, unambiguous, and they withstand all kinds of heavy-duty use.

Context

Lost in good intentions. Writing a research article usually chronologically follows the writing of a research proposal. Writing an article and writing a proposal are, however, two completely different ball games. Every research proposal must contain a statement how the project solves different Sustainable Development Goals and ultimately saves the world. This obligation may seduce us thinking that a research article should do the same. However, the purpose of a research article is not saving the world, but plainly to convey information.

Small cog in a large machine. The right context and realistic framework give credibility to the article. An article needs not to be framed with fashionable topics if the article scope is not truly in these topics. There are important topics beyond the fashionable ones too. An article is also valuable without exaggeration. Unfortunately, the use of scientific hyperlatives, such as “Groundbreaking” and “Innovative”, has increased by 2500% in 40 years (<https://www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h6467>). Pompous statements blur the message of the article. The article serves best the noble aspirations by conveying clear information in the right context. Saving the world is a long game.

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