

# Editorial guide to publishing with *ScienceAsia*

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**ABSTRACT:** Details are given about the types of manuscript *ScienceAsia* will consider for publication and the required structure, content, and format of manuscripts. The publication process from online submission to appearance in print is also described.

**KEYWORDS:** manuscript preparation, peer review, significant figures, vector graphics

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a detailed guide to preparing the structure and content of a manuscript intended for submission to *ScienceAsia*. The guide also describes the publishing process from online submission to the appearance of your article in print. This document is not yet complete – it will be updated periodically. If you are using  $\LaTeX$  to prepare your manuscript then you should also look at our  $\LaTeX$  guide ([www.scienceasia.org/scias\\_latex.pdf](http://www.scienceasia.org/scias_latex.pdf)) which gives advice on technical aspects. If you plan to use MSWord then you should start from our template ([www.scienceasia.org/ScienceAsia\\_template.doc](http://www.scienceasia.org/ScienceAsia_template.doc)). *ScienceAsia* does not differ greatly from other journals, and so most of this article may be viewed as a guide to writing a

manuscript for any journal. It is to your advantage if you take note of the parts of this article which are relevant to your work. A manuscript written following the guidelines given here is more likely to be processed quickly and is more likely to be published.

## IS MY MANUSCRIPT SUITABLE?

### Subject

Before preparing a manuscript for *ScienceAsia* you should be aware that it is not simply enough that the research you are presenting is new. A research article published in *ScienceAsia* should also meet at least one of the following criteria: (i) it introduces a new technique or significantly extends a previous one (ii) it presents useful or interesting experimental or computationally obtained findings (iii) it gives a new explanation for a phenomenon (iv) it derives significant theoretical results. Based on these criteria and other considerations, there are a number of types of paper which are unlikely to be accepted, as detailed in the following.

*Education studies.* We do not publish articles on teaching methods.

*Sociology studies.*

*Forecast studies.* We are not interested in publishing studies that merely take some time series data, use standard procedures to fit a curve to it, and then extrapolate.

*Optimization studies.* We are generally not interested in publishing optimization studies with little or no novel scientific insight unless it can be argued that the results are particularly interesting or useful.

*Descriptions of software.* We are not interested in manuscripts that just describe a computer program. If the program contains a novel algorithm then the manuscript should be concerned primarily with describing the algorithm and showing how it is superior to alternatives.

*Very specialized case studies using pre-existing techniques.* If the manuscript does not present any new techniques and the results are relevant only to the particular region or object of the study then we are unlikely to be interested in publishing it. Examples of such studies would be a survey of the species of fish in a lake or the construction of a particular bridge. If you are presenting a new method you are of course welcome to employ a case study to illustrate its use, but it should be clear from the title and abstract that the case study is an application of the new procedure, and not the main goal of the paper.

*Studies relating to the taxonomy, distribution, or farming of organisms that do not occur in Asia.*

Unless the authors can convincingly argue otherwise, such studies are unlikely to be of interest to the vast majority of the readers.

*Non-essential studies resulting in animal suffering or environmental damage.* Some research such as toxicity studies causes suffering to animals. Other studies may result in significant environmental damage. We are only interested in publishing such research if it is clear that the potential benefits from the knowledge gained outweigh the harm caused.

*Topics that have occurred more than once in recent issues.* The journal aims to maintain a good balance of topics covered by its articles. If a number of articles on a particular sub-field have appeared in recent issues then we are only likely to wish to publish another article on the subject in the near future if the findings are especially significant. In particular, to maintain a balance of topics covered, we try to avoid having articles on similar subjects by the same research group appearing too close to each other. This policy is also aimed at discouraging authors from splitting results from related experiments or calculations into a number of shorter papers – a single comprehensive paper giving all the findings is much more convenient for the scientific community in general.

*Algebra papers introducing a new level of abstraction with no interesting structure.* We are not interested in manuscripts that appear to be presenting a new level of abstraction for the sole purpose of publishing another paper.

*Survey articles.* We only publish survey or review articles if most of their content is not already covered in other review articles and if we feel that they would be of appeal to a significant proportion of the readership. Suitable review articles would include ones about a particular area of current general interest or application to a significant part of Asia. It is particularly important that a review article is well written. If none of the authors are excellent in English, it is essential that the article is corrected by a native English speaker before submission. Poorly written survey articles will not be considered further.

*Articles already published in conference proceedings.* We will not consider publishing manuscripts that are essentially the same as articles that have already appeared in conference proceedings and are accessible online.

If you are in any doubt about whether your subject area is suitable, you are welcome to email just the title and abstract to the editor and we will then be able to advise you on whether we are likely to be interested in publishing it. The abstract should be in plain text in

the body of the email, and not sent as an attachment.

### Standard of writing and presentation

A manuscript will only be considered further if

- (i) it does not contain many obvious careless errors;
- (ii) it is written using the standard scientific style;
- (iii) figures and tables (if any) are used appropriately and are well presented.

### Length

We aim to publish articles that are no longer than 10 journal pages. For L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X users this is easily checked by omitting the onecolumn option of the documentclass command. For MSWord users, the manuscript will certainly be too long if any of the following conditions are not met:

- if 12 pt, less than 540 lines;
- if 10 pt, less than 430 lines;
- less than 7000 words.

If there are many figure and/or tables, the above limits will be lower.

## MANUSCRIPT FRONT MATTER

### Title

The title should be concise but not too vague. In other words, the title should give a clear idea of what the paper is about and give enough detail to make it clear how the subject differs from similar studies, but should not contain redundant words or phrases. The title should not contain abbreviations unless they are familiar to the whole scientific community (e.g., NMR is a permissible abbreviation). Unless it is really necessary, try to avoid using equations and symbols in the title. If mentioning scientific (Latin) names, do not include the name of or abbreviation for the person who first classified the species. Also omit the family – these details can be given in the introduction; we prefer to keep the titles as succinct as possible.

Only the first word (and the first word after a colon) needs to be capitalized. The remaining words should only be capitalized if they are proper nouns.

### Authors and their affiliations

Only people who have made a significant contribution to the work should be listed as authors. Other people can be thanked in the acknowledgements. Likewise, no one who has made a significant contribution to the work (including doing the experiment) should be omitted from the list. It is the corresponding author's responsibility to ensure that this is the case,

and that all authors are aware that the manuscript is being submitted. After submission, no author can be dropped from the list of authors. When making a major revision to a manuscript after receiving the report from the referees, it might be necessary to enlist the help of another researcher. It would then be possible to add an author if a letter is sent to the editor explaining what additional contribution was made by them.

The preferred given name and initial(s), if any, as well as the surname for each author should be included. The surname should follow the given name and initials. E.g., write Cho-Liang Lin and not C.-L. Lin or Lin Cho-Liang.

If a given name has a hyphen and the second part is capitalized then initials from both parts will appear in the annual index of authors. E.g., Cho-Liang Lin will appear as Lin C-L whereas Cho-liang Lin will appear as Lin C.

If a surname is made up of more than one word (e.g., El Taibany), then we need to know so that the author's entry is given correctly in the annual index of authors. In such cases you may indicate the surname by writing it in capitals. E.g., Mohamed A. EL TAIBANY.

There should be no more than two genuine affiliations per author. By genuine affiliation we mean the postal address of a workplace of the author. If you feel that it is important to list other organizations, they can be mentioned in the acknowledgements.

We do not permit footnotes giving extra details such as current address or what proportion of the work was done by each author.

There can be only one corresponding author; this is usually the author who submits the manuscript online and who corresponds with the editor. One or two (long-term) e-mail addresses should be given.

### Abstract

The abstract should be a single paragraph of not more than 250 words concisely summarizing the paper. It should include a brief description of the motivation, methods, main results, and conclusions, and emphasize what is novel in the work. A common error is to use the first half or so of the abstract to introduce the subject. Only a sentence or two of introduction should be given, outlining the importance of the problem or why it is of interest.

Avoid using phrases like 'The aim of the study was to ...' or 'X and Y were compared'. Instead give the accomplished goal and the results of the comparison.

The abstract should be self-contained. Thus if

you define an abbreviation in the abstract (which you should only do if you will use it more than once again in the abstract), the abbreviation will need to be defined again in the main text. Similarly, any non-standard function or notation used in the abstract must be defined in the abstract *and* when it is first used in the main text. If it is essential to give a citation in the abstract, the details of the reference must be given in the text as follows: [author surname(s), *journal abbreviation*, **volume**, page]. Note that giving references in the abstract is not something we encourage, and it is usually easy to avoid doing so. The abstract should not refer directly to numbered equations, figures, or tables in the main article.

If it is necessary to include mathematical expressions in the abstract you may. However, equations should not be ‘displayed’ – i.e. they should be within the text and not given a separate line.

It is worth spending a lot of time perfecting the abstract. A manuscript whose title indicates it is of marginal interest and whose abstract is poorly written is likely to be rejected by the editorial. Potential referees decide whether or not to review the manuscript after being sent only the title, abstract, and keywords. A referee is more likely to agree to consider the manuscript, or at least suggest another more qualified person, if the abstract is well written and they can obtain a clear basic idea of the whole manuscript from it. A manuscript with such an abstract is therefore likely to be processed more quickly.

### Keywords

These are 3–5 terms (separated by commas and not capitalized) that are not already present in the title. The keywords are chosen to give the reader a little more information about the most important concepts in the article (after they have already seen the title but perhaps not yet read the abstract). Note that these keywords are not the same as the keywords that will appear in the annual keyword index. The keywords for the annual index are selected later by the editors, although you are welcome to make suggestions for this based on the type of entries in last year’s index.

## MANUSCRIPT SECTIONS

### Introductory sections

The introduction should start with a brief background to the subject. As *ScienceAsia* is not specialized, our wide readership would appreciate it if you could make the first paragraph of the introduction comprehensible to any scientifically literate person.

The remainder of the introduction should then

outline the current state of the field followed by the aim of the present study, the reason for carrying it out, and its relationship to reported work in the area. Avoid excessive detail when you describe the field as a whole. More detail can be given as you ‘home in’ on the topic of the manuscript so that it becomes apparent how your work will advance the field.

In the case of a mathematical or any other purely theoretical paper, you may wish to have an additional introductory section (called, for example, ‘preliminaries’) in which the formulism and any important results you will be using later can be given. Such a section would be in place of the methods section present in manuscripts giving results of experimental or computational work.

### Method sections

The methods sections give brief but sufficient information for others to be able to reproduce the results. Details of procedures should be presented only if they are not given elsewhere in the literature. If the procedures are modifications of existing ones, give only the modifications.

In the case of mathematics or other theoretical papers, the authors can follow the usual convention of combining the methods and results into one or more sections with suitably informative headings.

### Results and discussion sections

The results can be presented inside the text, in figures, or in tables. Avoid redundant presentation in the text of the data already shown in tables or figures, or the use of both figures and tables to show the same data. Always aim to present the results in the most compact way possible. If a set of results involves just a few numbers, the results should be presented in the body of the text and not as a figure or table.

Sub-headings may be used to help keep results of the same type together.

If you have a separate discussion section, avoid repeating the results in a lot of detail before discussing them. If you think this is unavoidable, then combine the results and discussion into a single section called RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Many authors do this anyway and it tends to make a paper with many different types of results easier to follow.

The discussion should be concise and give the interpretation and significance of the results and how they relate to other published work. Avoid giving a long list of comparisons with other studies if you are unable to discuss why your results differ from the others. It is not necessary for the discussion to be

very long. Authors should not be tempted to bolster insubstantial results by a lengthy discussion.

### Conclusions

It is not necessary to have a concluding section. If the content of the conclusions section is identical to that of the abstract then you may as well omit it. If you do decide to include a concluding section, at least part of it should be saying something different from the rest of the manuscript; for example, it might mention possible implementations of the results or suggestions for further study.

### Acknowledgements

This section is for briefly acknowledging contributions of individuals that influenced the content of the manuscript, organizations that helped to make the work possible, and sources of financial support. Grant numbers may be specified. When giving names of people, omit their titles (e.g. Mr, Dr, Prof), qualifications (e.g. PhD), and affiliations.

### References

When submitting the manuscript it is important that the references include the title and that the details are accurate. This is because we often choose referees from authors of papers in a similar field referred to in the manuscript. Also, a referee will not be impressed if their paper is cited incorrectly. Note that some names of authors contain accents or other 'non-standard' characters, e.g., Sáez, Ramírez, Lemaître, Nørgaard, Çopuroğlu, Castañeda. These modifications to characters should not be ignored.

You should not group a set of related citations into a single entry in the list of references. In other words, each reference number should be associated with only one document.

The reference section of this document has examples giving the formats for published journal articles<sup>1-4</sup>, journal articles in press<sup>5</sup>, books<sup>6</sup>, chapters in books<sup>7</sup>, proceedings<sup>8</sup>, theses<sup>9,10</sup>, and technical reports<sup>11</sup>.

On submission we do not insist that references conform exactly to the above style. However, once it has become apparent that your manuscript is likely to be accepted you should make sure that the following details in particular are adhered to. Only use et al if there are more than 8 authors. The author/editor initials follow the surname. The year is in brackets after the author(s). Titles of books and proceedings should be in italics and capitalized. All other titles should not be in italics (except words which are always italicized such as scientific names) and should not be capitalized

(except for words that are always capitalized). The names of journals should be in italics. In the case of obscure journals give the full name of the journal. In other cases you may give a standard abbreviation for the journal instead. In all cases the journal name will be converted to the required abbreviation by our manuscript processing software. The volume number of journal articles should be in bold font. First and last page numbers must be given for journal articles, articles in proceedings, and chapters in books. For journals which have article numbers instead of page numbers, give only the article number and not the number of pages (e.g., Ref. 3). Except for journal articles, a page range and an individual page should be preceded by pp and p, respectively. You do not need to abbreviate the last page number as this is done by our software.

You are very welcome to also give us the DOI of the references, but this is not obligatory except in the case of articles in press. We normally attempt to find the DOI manually – a time-consuming process. Note that at present we are only interested in the DOI and not in any other types of links to publications.

Aside from the DOI (and in some cases the issue number), you should not give any extraneous information such as the publisher of journals or proceedings or the total number of pages in books. In the case of webpages (which you should only cite if there is really no alternative) you do not need to give the date accessed. It is preferable to mention webpages in the text directly rather than include them in the references.

Although the references will be listed in the order of citation in the published article, it is not necessary for you to order the references yourself – our software will take care of that. However, it would be helpful if you check that only references cited in the text appear in the list and that no reference appears more than once.

### Sections that are not permitted

**list of nomenclature/abbreviations** Do not include a section entitled list of nomenclature or abbreviations. Instead, define all symbols and abbreviations in the text the first time they are used.

**appendices** The journal does not allow for appendices.

**supplementary material** At present we do not have the facilities to have supplementary online sections.

## MANUSCRIPT CONTENT

### Citations

Throughout the manuscript, references should be given for any non-trivial techniques or results that are not being presented by the authors as new. Citations are made by using superscripted numbers like this<sup>1</sup>, or when mentioning a reference as part of a sentence you should use, for example, Ref. 1.

In the text, avoid referring to the authors of references unless necessary. If authors are referred to explicitly, the superscript cite number must still be present. Also, when mentioning authors of cited work, give only the surnames – do not include initials for the first names and do not include the year.

Include only the most important references. If there is a choice, the best references tend to be in the following order: journal article, book, conference proceedings, others. Try to avoid giving references that are not published and/or difficult to obtain such as theses and technical reports, or those that are not in English.

We wish to strongly discourage authors from citing articles on webpages. Such articles are not published and are subject to change, censorship, and deletion. You should certainly not cite Wikipedia pages.

When giving multiple citations following a single idea, there should not be more than 3 (or possibly 4) citations.

### Materials, equipment, and software

To specify the supplier of materials or equipment put the company name in brackets after the item. There is no need to give the country in which the company is based unless the company is not well-known by people in your field. E.g., write (Fluka) not (Fluka, Switzerland).

There is no need to use trademark (TM) or registered trademark (R) symbols as there is no legal requirement to do so (and they will be removed by our manuscript processing software anyway).

In the case of centrifugation give the *g*-value rather than the rpm. E.g., the sample was centrifuged at 4000*g* for 10 min.

### Abbreviations

Abbreviations should only be defined once and only used if the abbreviation appears later on in the text. Avoid non-standard abbreviations unless they are used at least 3 times in the text. Do not use abbreviations for two short words. E.g., don't abbreviate black hole.

You do not need to give the meaning of very commonly used abbreviations such as NMR or ANOVA which are used in a wide variety of fields.

When defining an abbreviation you should not capitalize the words in the definition (unless they are proper nouns). E.g., write discrete Fourier transform (DFT) rather than Discrete Fourier Transform (DFT).

As is usual practice in the biological sciences, the genus should be abbreviated by its the first letter after the first time the scientific name appears in full, provided there is no mention of another genus beginning with the same letter. In the case of the first figure caption in which a scientific name appears, you may wish to write the name in full as readers sometimes like to peruse the figures first before reading the whole article.

### Numbers, significant figures, and errors

Do not use commas to separate groups of three digits; e.g., write 3500 rather than 3,500. The journal uses thin spaces instead of commas for numbers with more than 4 digits to the left of the decimal point. There is no need for you to add these thin spaces – our manuscript processing software will add them automatically.

In the case of ordinal numbers, there is no need to raise the 'st', 'nd', 'rd', or 'th'. E.g., write 4th rather than 4<sup>th</sup>.

Always use an appropriate number of significant figures. If you write a number without giving any other indication of the uncertainty then it is assumed that all the digits are significant – i.e., correct. E.g., if you write 28.0 without a standard deviation then this implies that you are sure that the value lies between 27.95 and 28.05, in other words, the value is not 27.9 or 28.1. An exception to this are the zeros immediately to the left of the decimal point which are generally considered to be not significant. Thus writing 600 m implies 1 significant figure accuracy. (In this case, if you wish to indicate that this quantity is being given to 3 significant figures you should write 6.00 10<sup>2</sup> m or 0.600 km.)

Even if you are sure of the accuracy of a particular result, it may be misleading or not be of interest to give more than 1 or 2 significant figures. For example, suppose 51 patients out of 87 prove positive for a test. It would be true to say that 58.6% (or even 58.621%) of the patients tested were positive. However, with such a small sample, one could only reasonably conclude that 0.6 of the population from which the sample was drawn would be positive. Thus writing 59% would be more appropriate in this case.

The appropriate numbers of significant figures

should also be used when giving the mean and standard deviation. If the standard deviation is large it only makes sense to give the mean and standard deviation to 1 or 2 significant figures. E.g., if you find the result  $4.83 \pm 1.24$  then write  $4.8 \pm 1.2$ .

### Units

SI units should be used throughout unless it is common practice in the field to use other units. Abbreviations for units are in roman (upright) font. Take care to use the correct case for the unit. E.g., write 20 km and not 20 *Km*.

The journal uses l rather than L as the symbol for litres. Ensure that units given in figures follow this convention.

If the unit contains only one reciprocal of a fundamental unit (following a non-reciprocal fundamental unit), we would prefer you to use ‘/’ rather than raising to the power  $-1$ . E.g., write mg/l rather than  $\text{mg l}^{-1}$ . However, if the unit contains only reciprocals, you should use the superscript format. E.g., write  $50 \text{ min}^{-1}$  rather than 50 /min. You should never use more than one ‘/’ in the units. E.g., write  $4.2 \text{ kJ kg}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1}$  rather than 4.2 kJ/kg/K.

Do not separate fundamental units by dots or dashes. Instead use a thin space. E.g., write 10  $\Omega \text{ m}$  and not 10  $\Omega \cdot \text{m}$  or 10  $\Omega\text{-m}$ .

When giving the dimensions of surfaces or volumes the unit should be present for each direction. E.g., write  $1 \text{ cm} \times 1 \text{ cm}$  rather than  $1 \times 1 \text{ cm}$ .

Note that ppt denotes parts per trillion. Parts per thousand should be denoted by ‰. Alternatively, the quantity can be re-expressed as a percentage.

### *p*-values

Once you have said that differences were considered significant when  $p < 0.05$ , do not put ( $p < 0.05$ ) after every statistically significant result or ( $p > 0.05$ ) after every statistically insignificant result. You may, however, state the *p*-value if you know it. *p*-values should not be given to more than 2 significant figures.

### Symbols and mathematical expressions

Symbols composed of a single letter should be in italic font with the exception of vectors which should be in bold roman (upright) font. Symbols composed of more than one letter (e.g., Re for Reynolds number) should not be italic. If the symbol has a subscript, the subscript should be in roman font if it stands for a word and in italics if the subscript is a variable. E.g., write  $k_c$  for critical wavenumber but  $k_x$  for the component of the wavenumber in the *x*-direction.

Try to avoid using words to represent quantities in equations. Define a single-letter symbol instead.

Do not use the times symbol  $\times$  or a central dot between variables to denote multiplication. E.g., write  $F = ma$  and not  $F = m \times a$  or  $F = m \cdot a$ .

Bear in mind that if you are using an italic small letter ‘v’ as a symbol and the symbol appears in a figure, a *v* can look like the Greek letter  $\nu$  in some fonts. In such a case you should choose the fonts you use in your figures carefully (e.g., Helvetica is OK, but Times is not) or instead use a different symbol (such as *V*) throughout the manuscript.

Symbols for functions with more than one letter should be in roman font. E.g., write  $\text{cosec } x$  rather than *cosec* *x*.

There is no need to give the definitions of standard functions such as the gamma function  $\Gamma(x)$  or error function  $\text{erf}(x)$ .

Expressions involving fractions in the body of the text should use a solidus (‘/’ symbol) rather than a horizontal line to denote division except if the numerator and denominator are both small integers in which case the horizontal line is preferable. E.g., write  $a/2b$  rather than  $\frac{a}{2b}$ , but e.g., writing  $\text{spin-}\frac{3}{2}$  is permissible.

### Equations

Equations can appear in the body of the text or be ‘displayed’ i.e., appear by themselves on a separate line. Unlike figures and tables, displayed equations are read as part of the text and thus follow the usual rules of punctuation; if the equation ends a sentence it should be followed by a full stop. If the equation does not end the sentence, make sure that there is no new paragraph after the equation. The following sentence is an example of the standard way of introducing an equation. The energy *E* is given by

$$E = \frac{mc^2}{\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}}$$

where *m* and *v* are, respectively, the rest mass and speed of the object, and *c* is the speed of light. Do not give an explanation of the symbols by using a separate line for each symbol.

A displayed equation should only have an equation number if either you refer to the equation later in the manuscript or the equation is a key result which others may wish to refer to when mentioning your article. An equation should never be referred to before it is displayed.

If the equation does not need a number, is short, and does not contain a fraction then to save space the equation should not be displayed.

## Tables

Before creating a table, first decide whether this is the most efficient way to present the data. In almost all cases, you should not use a table if the table would have only one row of results – it is much more efficient to give the information in the manuscript text instead.

Tables must be in a text, not graphics, format and should be placed in the appropriate place in the body of the manuscript. There is no need to send the tables separately or have a list of table captions.

The caption (which appears above the tabulated data) should contain only the title of the table. Define symbols and abbreviations (if not already given in the text) immediately below the last row of the tabulated data. Make additional comments on the data with the aid of footnotes labelled a, b, c, etc. The table caption should only appear once in the manuscript – do not make a separate list of table captions.

Tables do not need any vertical lines to separate columns and horizontal lines should be used sparingly.

Do not change the font type (to bold or italics) for table headings. If really necessary, bold or italic font may be used for some entries in the table to give extra information (which should be explained in the table footnotes).

A column should never contain just one symbol or value. This information should instead be presented somewhere in the text. Similarly, a column containing all the same value or symbol with only one or two exceptions should also be replaced by a statement in the text.

If you are considering including tables or figures that do not show results you are presenting in the manuscript, think carefully whether it is really necessary to include them. They are probably not necessary if the contents of the tables or figures are not referred to in the discussion.

Wherever possible, combine tables showing similar types of data into a single table. You might need to temporarily decrease the font size to do this.

In the case of wide tables, never split a row onto a new line. Instead use a smaller font size for the table.

## Figures

As with tables, before preparing a figure, first think whether it is necessary. In the case of a figure showing results, if the figure is showing 3 or 4 results which are not a function of an independent variable, e.g., the amounts of a chemical in 4 different substances, then this information could be more efficiently given in the text.

Figures *not* to include:

- maps simply giving the location of a study site – give the latitude and longitude instead
- screen dumps of graphical user interfaces – we are never interested in seeing what a program looks like when running
- flowcharts of experimental procedures

As we often ask authors to improve figures, it is essential that you keep the data used to generate the figure.

The format in which figures which are not photos are submitted for the final version of the article is crucial. Figures containing mostly text, lines, and numbers (such as graphs, diagrams of apparatus, and maps) must be EPS (encapsulated PostScript) or PDF files. The only way to obtain usable EPS or PDF files is from the program generating the figure. We cannot use EPS files that have been obtained by conversion from another format. In particular, we can never use EPS or PDF files obtained from Photoshop. *Photoshop should only be used for photos.*

To produce graphics files in EPS or PDF format you will need to use a graph or diagram drawing program that is capable of giving vector PDF or (non-binary format) EPS files as the output (e.g., IGOR Pro, Origin, Matlab, Mathematica, Maple, gnuplot, Corel Draw, SigmaPlot, Adobe Illustrator, Inkscape, Xfig, Treeview). Note that SigmaPlot cannot produce vector PDF files; you should instead export as EPS by selecting ‘Graph’ followed by ‘Export’ and ‘EPS (no preview, \*.eps)’, and in ‘Text Options’ select ‘Convert to PostScript fonts’. Alternatively, if you are using other Windows programs (such as MS Excel), you can print the graph or diagram with the option ‘print to file’ using a PostScript or PDF printer driver.

Keep the amount of text in figures to a minimum. The title(s) of illustrations should be placed in the caption (which is below the illustration) and not within the illustration itself.

In the case of subfigures, the subfigure labels (a), (b), (c), etc. should preferably be placed in the top left of each subfigure in such a way that it does not increase the overall size of the subfigure. Thus in the case of photos these labels should be placed within the photo and for graphs the labels should ideally appear within the rectangle defined by the axes. Once the manuscript has passed the refereeing stage, you should omit the subfigure labels from the photo files you send us since we have software for adding the labels of the correct font automatically provided the files are named fig1a.jpg, etc. For PDF files we need you to add the subfigure labels (preferably in



Helvetica font) of an appropriate size yourself in all cases.

Text (legends and axis labels and numbers) should preferably be in the Helvetica (or the L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X Computer Modern) font. The font size should be such that the text is of a similar size to the text in the caption when the figure is reduced to the width of a single column. The default font size of most plotting programs is usually too small. In the case of Matlab you can change the font size by entering the following:

```
set(0,'defaultaxesfontsize',20);
set(0,'defaulttextfontsize',20);
```

With the exception of logarithmic scales, the numbering on an axis should be to a fixed number of decimal places, e.g., if the values plotted range between 0.17 and 2.32 the tick marks on the axis should be 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5 (and not 0, 0.5, 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5). Some graph drawing programs do not do this by default. E.g., after creating a plot in Matlab you need to enter the following to get 1 decimal place for the *X*-axis:

```
xt=get(gca,'XTick');
set(gca,'XTickLabel',sprintf('%.1f|',xt));
```

The axis labels should be in the following format: symbol followed by the unit in brackets. E.g.,  $d_1$  (km). Remember to use the correct font for symbols. For example, to label the *X*-axis in this way in Matlab use

```
xlabel('\it d_1 (km)')
```

If no symbol has been defined then use the (uncapitalized) name of the quantity. E.g., wavenumber ( $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ).

The *Y*-axis label should only be written vertically if there is not enough room for it to be written horizontally. In Matlab, which writes the *Y*-axis vertically by default, you can obtain  $\lambda$  (nm) written horizontally by using

```
ylabel('\lambda (nm) ', 'Rotation', 0)
```

Note that the spaces after (nm) may be needed to prevent the text colliding with the axis numbers.

In the case of contour plots or maps the axes should be isotropic. This is so that, for example, circular features appear as circles rather than ellipses. In Matlab this is achieved using:

```
axis equal
```

For plots which are not isotropic, try to use an appropriate aspect ratio to avoid wasting space – this is particularly important if you have many plots. For example, in Matlab use

```
set(gca,'PlotBoxAspectRatio',[1 0.5 1])
```

to make the length of the horizontal axis twice that of the vertical axis.

Avoid using colour in plots and diagrams unless you are willing to meet the cost of printing the colour plates (15000 THB). Just use greyscales or different

line styles instead, if necessary. We have found that the appearance of colours when printed in black and white depends a lot on the printer – a coloured line which appears distinct in one printout can be virtually invisible in a printout from a different make of printer. Some programs (e.g., Matlab) automatically plot lines in different colours. To disable this in Matlab use

```
colormap([0 0 0])
```

If the figure is not a photo, use a white background, even if you are paying for the colour printing. This will make the subject of the figure easier to see if the reader wishes to print the article using a black and white printer.

Once the manuscript is accepted, any photos should be sent to us as high-resolution JPEG or TIFF files. Photos should not contain the name of the photographer or image source. If the photographer is not one of the authors, or the image is from another publication, this information can be given in the figure caption. A scale should appear on photomicrographs.

The figures should not contain the name of the figure (the figure number) or the caption. We should be able to identify the figure from the name of the file.

### Figure captions

Avoid putting obvious statements in captions. For example, it is not necessary to write a ‘semi-log plot’ – this will be obvious from the axes.

Do not put material (such as experimental details) in the caption which has already appeared in the text.

Avoid putting plot symbols in the caption.

Do not include a separate list of figure captions. The figure caption should only appear below the figure and the figure should appear in the appropriate place within the text.

### Writing style

The manuscript should be written as concisely as possible.

*Avoid ambiguous terms.* E.g., use ‘increase’ instead of ‘enhance’ if that is what you mean by enhance.

*Avoid redundant words.* E.g., ‘collected samples’ should be ‘samples’ – there are no ‘uncollected samples’. Similarly, ‘treated and untreated samples’ should be ‘samples’ (or ‘all samples’ if you had just been referring to only some of the samples) since ‘treated and untreated’ covers all cases.

*Conjuncts.* Avoid starting almost every sentence with a conjunct such as consequently, in addition, on the other hand, or however – this becomes tiring to read. A paragraph should never start with a conjunct.

*Tenses.* Once a result has been published it is regarded as established fact and so is still true and should therefore be in the present tense. This also helps distinguish such a result from the authors' results which should be in the past. An exception to this is when one writes "Ng et al found that ..." – then that should be in the past.

## Spelling

The journal uses Oxford English Dictionary (OED) spelling which is also used in official documents of international bodies such as the UN and WHO and international journals employing stringent editing such as *Nature*. However, you only need to make sure that all words in the manuscript text are spelled correctly in some version of English. Our manuscript processing software will convert all correctly spelled words to OED spelling automatically. We cannot change words in figures easily so these should follow OED spelling.

Titles of references should have the same spelling and punctuation as in the original published article, although the capitalization of titles should follow the guidelines given earlier.

## MANUSCRIPT PROCESSING

This section details the steps involved in processing a manuscript from when it is submitted online until it appears in print.

### Online submission

We only consider manuscripts submitted as PDF files via the online submission form at [www.scienceasia.org/submission\\_manuscripts.php](http://www.scienceasia.org/submission_manuscripts.php).

*Covering letter.* The manuscript should be accompanied by a covering letter (in the form of a separate PDF file called CoverLetter.pdf) which states that the work is that of the authors and has not been published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. The covering letter is also an opportunity for the authors to explain why the work is interesting and should be published. Such an explanation is particularly important for a manuscript which is likely to be regarded as a borderline case according to the criteria given at the beginning of this guide.

*Type of article.* During submission the author has the opportunity to suggest what type of article the manuscript should be considered as (Research Article or Review Article).

*Provision of supplementary material.* For reviewing purposes, authors may provide supplementary material such as extensive experimental data, graphical or spectral data, which cannot be included in the paper due to space limitations. In addition, if the author

makes substantial reference to a paper that is difficult to obtain, the author may wish to supply an electronic copy of it.

*Ethical use of animals.* A manuscript reporting studies that involved the use of animals must be accompanied by a statement from the Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee, or similar body, to show that the animals received humane care according to the guidelines specified by the institution.

## Editorial review

After the online submission is complete, the editorial will check whether the manuscript is potentially suitable for publication in *ScienceAsia*. If it is not suitable we will aim to inform the author within a week of submission.

The following checks are also carried out on the manuscript. If any of them are not met, the manuscript will be returned to the authors to fix the problem(s).

*Line numbers present.* All manuscripts must have line numbers running from the beginning to the end. This is so that it is easy for the referees and editorial staff to make detailed comments if necessary – writing L273 instead of p.7, 2nd paragraph, 13th line saves a lot of time. If you are using the latest version of the scias.cls file then line numbers will appear automatically. If you do not see line numbers then you are using an old version of the class file.

*Manuscript with many equations was prepared using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X with the scias.cls file.* All mathematics manuscripts or any other manuscripts with many complicated equations must be prepared using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X with the scias.cls file.

*References have titles.* The titles of all papers in the list of references must be present. This is to help us to search for potential referees.

*English is of a sufficient standard.* We will tolerate minor grammatical errors, but if the English in the manuscript is so poor that it is difficult for the reader to understand we will require that the authors arrange for the grammar to be corrected before we send the manuscript to the referees. If one of the authors is clearly a native speaker we will be less tolerant – that author should have corrected the manuscript before submission.

*Manuscript is well presented and free of careless mistakes.* We will not send manuscripts with many obvious typing errors to referees. Authors who are not willing to take the time to carefully proof-read their manuscript before submission should not consider publishing with *ScienceAsia*.

### Peer review and author revision

Once the manuscript has passed the editorial review we will attempt to find experts in the field who are willing to act as referees. Each potential referee is sent only the title, abstract, and keywords. If they agree to review it they will be sent the entire manuscript and asked to review it within 2 weeks. If they take longer than this we send them reminders periodically.

If no experts in the field are willing to act as referees then we will be forced to reject the manuscript due to lack of interest. So far this has only happened once in the case of a very specialized mathematics manuscript.

The main purpose of the referees is to advise us on whether the work is new, significant, and correct. We will continue to seek the opinions of referees until we are convinced that either (i) one or more of the criteria have no chance of being met, in which case the manuscript will be rejected, or (ii) the manuscript meets all three criteria in which case the manuscript is likely to be accepted, although usually only after some revisions are made.

The referees usually require a number of corrections before they recommend that the manuscript is accepted. In some cases they are unable to assess whether the manuscript is worthy of publication until the authors clarify some details. Unless the suggested changes are all minor, at this stage the author should therefore not assume that the manuscript will eventually be accepted.

When returning a revised version of the manuscript the author(s) should provide a commentary on all the changes made. This should be done by first copying and pasting the comments of the referee(s) and then answering them one by one. If you decide not to follow a suggestion of the referee then you should explain why.

### Post-referee review (PRR)

After all the referees have indicated that they feel that the manuscript is now acceptable for publication, the editorial staff of the journal make a further check on the content of the manuscript. This is to ensure that any (normally minor) points that the referees did not address are cleared up and also that the manuscript conforms to the guidelines of the journal before the article is prepared for publication. The author is sent a 'PRR letter' by email giving details of the requested changes. The author should treat this as another referee report and respond by answering the changes point by point in the text of a reply to the email, or by sending an additional PDF file listing the changes.

Occasionally serious problems in the manuscript content are found during the PRR. If the authors are unable to fix these, the manuscript will end up being rejected.

Once we are satisfied with the changes to the manuscript and the figures are in the correct format, the author will be sent an acceptance letter and asked to complete a copyright form and pay the publication charge.

### Editing

After the manuscript has passed the post-referee review stage, if it is not already a  $\LaTeX$  file it is converted into one using Writer2LaTeX. There are some things such as citations and equations that Writer2LaTeX cannot always deal with and these are corrected by hand. The DOIs, if they can be found, are also added to the references manually. The  $\LaTeX$  file is then fed into our manuscript processing software which orders the references if necessary, makes numerous formatting adjustments, and corrects some minor errors. Further adjustments to the tables in particular are made by hand. The manuscript is then ready for detailed editing. During this process the editors will sometimes have additional queries for the authors which should be responded to promptly (by text in the body of the email and not by sending additional files). Once this stage of editing is completed, a proof version of the manuscript with line numbers is sent to the authors. The authors are given 2 working days to supply corrections. After the author corrections have been completed, further minor adjustments such as balancing columns of text and positioning of figures and tables are made.

### Online and printed versions

When all the manuscripts for the issue are in their final form, the article details are sent to the *ScienceAsia* database and the PDF files of the articles are made available on the website. The printed version of the issue is normally ready around 2 weeks after this.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How long does it take from submission to acceptance for publication?

From examining the received and accepted dates of *ScienceAsia* articles you will see it varies from a few weeks to over a year. The best way to ensure that your manuscript is published as quickly as possible is to follow the advice given in this guide.

### Why was my manuscript rejected by the editorial board before being sent to referees?

We can only publish about 90 manuscripts per year and we receive many more than this and so we have to be selective. Manuscripts which are poorly written, have many obvious mistakes, do not explain the significance of the work, are not sufficiently novel or interesting, are barely within the scope of the journal, are on topics recently covered several times by the journal, or have many format problems are the ones which we are unlikely to consider further.

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