Promise and Peril

Peer Review as an Act of Revision
Why does peer review matter?

Most of us work hard to understand—at least until we decide that a writer failed to work equally hard to help us reach that understanding, or, worse, has deliberately made our reading more difficult than it has to be...We write ethically when as a matter of principle, we would trade places with our intended readers and experience what they do as they read our writing. (Williams, 2005, 178-179)

When you read your own stuff, you are not really reading, but reviewing what you were thinking about at the time...Start sharing drafts early—long before you send your paper out for review. (Tara Gray)
Introduction

Organisms exhibit a wide range of life history strategies [1]. For example, some have early maturation while others delay maturation, some adopt semelparous reproductive strategies while others are iteroparous, and some are long-lived and others short-lived. Such

What is D about? What is C about?

• Understanding the Sustainability of Retail Food Recovery

• Demographic Diversity and Sustainable Fisheries

This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under CC BY-SA.
In a nonanonymouse 10-month follow-up evaluation (administered by e-mail), Seminar 1 participants continued to rate on the same scale that the seminar had improved their writing skills ($M = 3.63, SD = .74$). Furthermore, 7 out of 8 participants listed that the peer feedback helped to improve their writing skills the most. To illustrate, one participant wrote that the in-class discussions of revisions “forced me to consider the audience when writing and to be as clear as possible when trying to communicate my ideas.” Another participant wrote that the seminar’s format emphasized “the notion of writing with the reader/audience in mind, which has considerably changed my approach to writing manuscripts, grant proposals, presentation slides, and posters.” Also, one participant wrote that the feedback “helped to clarify my thinking almost more than my writing.” Also at this 10-month follow-up, 2 of the 5 Seminar 1 participants who received feedback on drafts of their journal articles reported that those articles were accepted for publication. Two others had resubmitted their articles with minor revisions after favorable reviews, and 1 participant was preparing to submit.
Early publishers thrive

Graduate students who publish frequently are most likely to continue publishing often throughout their careers, says a study (W. F. Laurance et al. *Bioscience* 63, 817–823; 2013). The authors looked at 182 academic biologists across four continents, examining how their publication rates for the first 10 years after their PhDs were affected by factors such as pre-PhD publication rate and date of first paper. The best predictor of successful publication was how often scientists published before receiving their PhDs. “Publish early, publish often,” says lead author William Laurance, a biologist at James Cook University in Cairns, Australia. He advises young scientists to work with their lab heads to secure lead authorship whenever possible, and not to focus exclusively on competitive journals.
Goal of Review and Revision
What do expert academic writers do?

Make a compelling case for why their studies need to be conducted [esp. in Introduction]

Put effort into explaining how their work contributes to the field [esp. in Discussion]

Write with multiple audiences in mind – fellow experts and less expert readers [a.k.a., writing style]
Process of Peer Review

1. Read whole first
2. Mark sections
3. Comment on issue
4. Discuss with author
Practice One
Establish the Central Story

Introduction

Organisms exhibit a wide range of life history strategies [1]. For example, some have early maturation while others delay maturation, some adopt semelparous reproductive strategies while others are iteroparous, and some are long-lived and others short-lived. Such demographic diversity is likely to have profound effects on population dynamics. As fisheries management worldwide faces the challenge of managing fish stocks that encompass broad demographic diversity, there is great interest in investigating the relationship between life history traits and population dynamics [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], and the need to adjust fish stock management based on fish life history strategies, e.g., [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. In this study, a simple population model was used to assess the effects of demographic diversity on population dynamics under fishing mortality.

Mark: unnecessary language
Comment: “too general – may be unnecessary” or “how does this connect?”
Discuss: If meanings are important, how so? Revise so that intended relationships are clear (e.g. flip order & make relevant to fish; if not, delete)
Establishing the Story

Mark: unnecessary language or irrelevant language

Comment: “too general – may be unnecessary” or “how does this connect?”

Discuss: If meanings are important, how so? Revise so that intended relationships are clear (e.g. flip order & make relevant to fish; if not, delete)
Practice Two
Building a mechanistic foundation to understand how to modulate neuronal activity to appropriately elicit a mitigating effect on symptoms is critical to the refinement of existing and translation of new surgical targets for DBS therapies. (35 words, 1 “be” verb)

Clearer (a): We want to understand the mechanisms responsible for modulating the neuronal activity that mitigates symptoms so we can refine existing surgical targets and define new potential targets for DBS therapies. (31 words, 4 verbs)

Clearer (b): What mechanisms are responsible for modulating the neuronal activity that mitigates symptoms? Finding these mechanisms is critical to refining existing surgical targets and defining new potential targets for DBS therapies. (12 words, 1 verb, one question / 18 words, 1 verb + 2 gerunds)
Lightening the Load

Mark: sentences with too many nouns and not enough verbs

Comment: “hard to understand what is happening”

Discuss: identify core assertion and how to break up into actual S-V-O type statements

The (in)famous Zombie Nouns TED Ed Vid
Practice Three
Confusing sentences

The second camp argues instead that there is no direct relation between mobility and distance, and that distance is a surrogate for the effect of *intervening opportunities* [19]. The migration from origin to destination is assumed to depend on the number of opportunities closer than this destination. A person thus tends to search for destinations where to satisfy the needs giving rise to its journey, and the absolute value of their distance is irrelevant. Only their ranking matters. Displacements are thus driven by the spatial distribution of places of interest, and thus by the response to opportunities rather than by transport impedance as in gravity models.

Identify points of confusion.

• Why “migration”? Why not “movement”?
• What is “closer than this destination”? Do you mean “number of opportunities between origin and destination”? That seems likely given the label, *intervening opportunities*.
• Blue circled stuff is really confusing. Absolute value of what? Ranking of what? What is “its” and “theirs”? 
Reviewing confusing sentences

Mark: sentences that are confusing/identify particular points if you can

Comment: “not sure what this means”

Discuss: identify core assertion and how to break up into actual S-V-O type statements
Field Test your Writing!

9/27/2019

Peer Review and Revision