

Other forms of writing

# Forms of writing

- Papers
- Proposals (including job applications)
  - Separate topic for discussion next week
- powerpoint
- Press Releases/popular articles
- Email
- Referee reports

# Powerpoint

- Clean
  - Don't have lines that go a single word over the space allocated
- Simple
  - Preferably a single plot
  - Make sure axes are legible, lines thick enough to see
- Title: short or single idea
- No complete sentences, but help guide the audience

# AAS Nova and Astrobites

- Aimed at general public
  - Other astronomers
  - Other scientists
  - Undergraduates
  - Funding agencies

# Press releases/popular short articles

- Tell a story
- Remember your audience
  - Aim it at your parents
  - No acronyms! Simplify terms!
- Advertise the importance
  - Never lie, but enhance the truth
- Examples: KIAA website!, Astrobites, AAS Nova, Observatory Newsletters

# Keep the logical flow

- Start with a way to catch the audience
- Describe exciting result (very briefly)
- Put into context by describing past results
- Describe exciting new results in slightly more detail
  - Include what facilitated the advance
    - New instrument or survey?
    - New insight?
- Distribute credit
  - It never hurts to acknowledge contributions from others
  - Financial and/or other credit may be necessary
  - Political considerations (keep others happy)
- Direct quotes are fine
  - Credit to others
  - Can be more speculative than the rest of the text

# Email is not wechat!

- Most of your professional communication will be email
- Proofread your emails
- Be professional
  - Sometimes formal, “Dear Greg”
    - Unusual, very formal: “Dear Prof. Herczeg”
- Format and structure are important
  - If long, put important information/structure in body of email, details after your email signature (for me, -greg)
- Be careful about your cc list
  - Write every email like it will appear on Weibo
- Be concise and to the point
- Be careful! Email can be easily misinterpreted
  - If nervous or new, can ask your advisor for help
- Check your spam (emails from journals, jobs, other announcements)

# Email is not wechat!

- Examples of problem emails deleted



# Submission and referee process

- Submit your paper
- Editor finds an appropriate referee
  - Most people first referee in their postdoc
- Referee submits a report within 3-4 weeks

# Referee report

- Address to the editor, not the authors
  - Never use “you”: report is to editor
  - Try to be positive, especially in first paragraphs
- Editor decides on acceptance/revision/rejection
  - Referee report makes recommendations

One minor suggestion for future reports: I tend to use "The authors" rather than "You" in reports for two reasons: the bureaucratic reason is that the referee report is technically for the editor to inform the editor of whether or not the paper should be accepted, it's not meant for the authors. The more practical reason is that when the referee report is harsh, using "you" can seem more confrontational, while "The authors" defuses some of that tension by being more impersonal and deflecting it to the editor.

# Referee reports

- I usually ask authors to consider my comments
  - In some cases, I will request changes before the journal considers the paper for publication
- Try to find logical flaws, weak points, unclear figures and text, and other problems
  - What is the main point of the paper?
  - Why might the authors be wrong (but they are experts and know more, so they are probably right)
- Referees are not perfect!
  - I try to identify all potential problems, let the authors push back
- CLARITY OF ARGUMENTS!

# How to respond to referee reports

- Clearly!
- Point by point!
- Separate Referee and Response clearly (color differences and/or in other ways)
- Clearly mark the changes! (sometimes I'll list CHANGES) in addition to REFEREE and RESPONSE
- All major changes identified at the start of your response to the referee

REFEREE: As a general remark, the use of the word "background" across the paper is sometimes misleading. It generally means actually "off-cloud", instead of the more common meaning of "located behind". I suggest that the authors use "off-cloud" instead of background when they mean that.

RESPONSE: Changed throughout the text to "off-cloud", where we mean "off-cloud", including in Figure 3.

# How to respond to referee reports

- Deep breaths
  - Read quickly
  - Send to co-authors
  - Put aside until tomorrow
- Most referee reports help to better explain the results to the readers: this is helpful!
- Sometimes referee reports will be more challenging
- The authors are writing to the editor, not to the referee
- The paper is yours, do not let the referee force you to say something you don't want to say!
  - Be pragmatic

# Referee process is just one aspect of peer review

- Referee process is not perfect!
- Most journals have one single referee
  - Not an expert on everything in your paper!
  - Some advantages/disadvantages to one referee
- How is your work evaluated by the collection of your peers, not a single person
  - Citations
  - Outreach to peers: talks, facebook, twitter