Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci

Writing Professional English

A Reference Handbook for Medical Engineering

A Language Competences Project

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Chapter 1 TYPES OF WRITING

In this chapter we outline some of the main differences between certain important kinds of scientific and technical writing. These are

- scientific articles
- research papers
- technical reports
- writing a review
- proposals
- product descriptions

1.1 Scientific Articles

Scientific and technical articles are mainly published in journals, magazines and newspapers. They are normally intended to reach a wider audience than research papers.

Thinking about your audience

How scientific articles are written depends on who the readers are likely to be. A more scholarly, academic or discipline-specific journal will allow specialised vocabulary, while a piece in a more popular magazine, for example, will present and explain the data in an accessible manner for a wider audience and therefore in a more informal, less technical style. The writer must know what kind of people he or she is writing for.

The structure of a scientific article

Articles need to be a seamless whole: paragraph flowing into paragraph, ideas presented smoothly in logical order. Structurally they can be broken down into these three parts:

- The introduction
- The main body
- The conclusion

Each of these is covered in detail in various sections in Chapter 2 on *Composition*.

Articles and essays need to be well thought out and ordered. How the writer introduces the piece, builds on the introduction through the body, and concludes will largely determine how the information is accepted. Step by step, the writer must present main ideas, supporting evidence, analyses and conclusions in a logical and organised manner. The writing must not wander, but keep to its task of presenting the writer's information in the clearest possible way.

Style Manuals

Every discipline has its own style standard. These *Style Manuals* are published and readily available for each field, science and discipline. Writers are responsible for knowing and following the standard of their own particular discipline.