

November 2001

This is an extended version of the guide to authors that appears in the printed edition of *Nature*. It describes how to prepare papers for submission, and explains *Nature's* policy. Also relevant to authors is "[How to get published in *Nature*](#)".

The short version of *Nature's* Guide to Authors is available as PDF file (one page) at www.nature.com/nature/submit/gta/short-gta.pdf.

If you wish to search the text below, press 'control f' and enter the search term, for example 'figure format'. If you have any questions arising from these guidelines, please contact Dr Maxine Clarke at m.clarke@nature.com in the first instance.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines can seriously delay the handling of your contribution.

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1. Formats for description of research

Nature's main formats for original research are Articles and Letters to *Nature*. *Nature* also publishes a few Brief Communications (see [7.6](#)).

1.1 Articles are original reports whose conclusions represent a substantial advance in understanding of an important problem and are of broad general interest. They do not normally exceed 5 pages of *Nature* and have no more than 50 references. (One page of undiluted text is about 1,300 words.)

They have an unreferenced summary, separate from the main text, of up to 150 words, which does not contain numbers, abbreviations or measurements unless essential. This summary contains a brief account of the background and rationale of the work, followed by a statement of the main conclusions introduced by the phrase 'Here we show' or its equivalent.

The article itself begins with up to 500 words of referenced text expanding on the background to the work (some overlap with the summary is acceptable), before proceeding to a concise, focused account of the findings, ending with one or two short paragraphs of discussion. The text is broken up by a few short subheadings of no more than 40 characters each.

1.2 Letters to *Nature* are short reports of original research focused on an outstanding finding whose importance means that they will be of interest to scientists in other fields.

They do not normally exceed 2.5 pages of *Nature*, and have no more than 30 references. They begin with a fully referenced paragraph of not more than 180 words, aimed at readers in other disciplines. This paragraph contains a summary of the background and rationale for the work, followed by a statement of the main conclusions introduced by the phrase 'Here we show' or its equivalent.

A further brief paragraph of introductory material is permissible, but the main text thereafter should be confined to a brief description of the findings, with only one short paragraph of discussion.

2. Readability *Nature* is an international journal covering all the sciences. Contributions should therefore be written clearly and simply so that they are accessible to readers in other disciplines and to readers for whom English is not their first language.

- Essential but specialized terms should be explained concisely but not didactically.
- It is often useful to ask colleagues specializing in other disciplines to comment on the clarity of a final draft before submission to *Nature*.

- *Nature*'s editors provide detailed advice about format before contributions are formally accepted for publication. Papers are often shortened before acceptance; *Nature*'s editors frequently suggest revised titles and rewrite the summaries of Articles and first paragraphs of Letters.
- After acceptance, *Nature*'s subeditors ensure that the text and figures are readable and clear to those outside the field, and edit papers into *Nature*'s house style.

Contributors are sent proofs and are welcome to discuss proposed changes with *Nature*'s editors, but *Nature* reserves the right to make the final decision about matters of style and the size of figures.

See *Nature* 382,3; and 384, 497; 1996 for more details about readability.

3. How to prepare your paper

(See also http://www.nature.com/nature/submit/get_published/index.html for how to write a scientific paper, *Nature*'s editorial criteria for peer-review, and what happens to a paper after submission.)

3.1 Selection process. Pressure on *Nature*'s limited space is extreme. Most submitted papers are returned by the editors without formal peer review, largely on the basis of their likely interest to scientists in other areas. Of those papers selected for review, more than half are rejected, and more than one round of review is normal. Overall, fewer than one in every ten submitted Articles and Letters can be accepted. This pressure also means that brevity is essential.

3.2 Procedure for submission.

When possible, Letters and Articles should be submitted online via www.nature.com/nature/submit/. Authors may not submit by email.

Authors submitting Letters and Articles online should **not** send a hard copy of their papers.

Authors who cannot submit online may submit one hard copy, with disk, by mail. Files should be prepared in the same manner as for online submissions. **Do not submit by e-mail. E-mailed submissions will be returned to the author.**

(Submissions to most other sections of *Nature* are by e-mail and authors should not use the online submissions service; see the instructions for the appropriate part of *Nature* in section 7 below.)

Contributions should be double-spaced and written in English (spellings as in the *Oxford English Dictionary*). In paper versions, text should be on one side of the paper only.

One copy of paper submissions and revisions (or resubmissions) is required. Figures should be at the back, each figure on a separate page.

Submitted papers should be accompanied by a brief covering letter from the corresponding author, containing the number of words of text in the paper, a rough estimate of the number of pages of *Nature* it will fill (see 4.2 and 4.8 for details of the calculation), a full current postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Authors must specify if they prefer *Nature* not to communicate by fax.

The covering letter should also contain a concise paragraph indicating why the paper is appropriate for *Nature* rather than for a specialist journal. All Articles and Letters to *Nature* that are selected for peer-review are sent to at least one, but usually two or more, independent reviewers, selected by the editors. Authors are welcome to suggest suitable independent referees, and may also request that *Nature* excludes one or two (but no more) individuals or laboratories if there is a specific, declared conflict of interest. *Nature* sympathetically considers such requests, but the editor's decision on the choice of referees is final. All referees undertake to keep *Nature*

manuscripts confidential, and not to redistribute them without permission from *Nature*, before agreeing to review the manuscript. By this and by other means, *Nature* endeavours to keep the content of all submissions confidential until the publication date (but see section 5.3), but it is not responsible for the conduct of referees. *Nature* does not require all authors of a paper to sign the letter of submission, nor does it impose an order on the list of authors. *Nature* does, however, consider all contributions for publication on the condition that all the listed authors have agreed all the content. The corresponding (submitting) author is responsible for having ensured that this agreement has been reached.

- Where it is necessary to distinguish authors' institutions, symbols are introduced in the order: * † ‡ § || ¶ #, then doubled.
- *Nature* prefers authors to be listed without details of relative status; if it is essential to indicate that two or more co-authors are equal in status, they may be identified by an additional symbol with the caption 'these authors contributed equally to the work' immediately under the address list. Authors are encouraged to specify the contribution made by their co-authors in the Acknowledgements (see [Nature 399, 393](#); 1999). Other groupings of co-authors according to status are not allowed.
- Present addresses appear immediately below the author list; all other essential author-related explanation is in the acknowledgements.

One copy of any relevant paper by any of the authors submitted or in press elsewhere (including papers submitted elsewhere while the *Nature* contribution is under consideration) should be attached as PDF, clearly marked as such; failure to disclose this information may lead to rejection. (Authors submitting by mail should include one copy of supporting manuscripts, where possible in electronic form, but where not, on paper.)

Nature does not consider contributions under consideration or published elsewhere. If part of a contribution has appeared or has been submitted elsewhere, the paper is not automatically rejected so long as the main result, conclusion and implications are not apparent from the other work. In this event, the corresponding author must specify in the covering letter which part of the contribution will appear or has appeared elsewhere, indicating the publication concerned.

Authors must also state whether any material in the paper has appeared or will appear on a preprint server and, if so, which (see [5.2](#)).

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- If authors cannot submit online, papers can be submitted to the Editor at *Nature*, Porters South, 4 Crinan St, London N1 9XW, UK or Nature, 968 National Press Building, Washington DC 20045, USA.
- Packets posted in countries outside the destination country should be marked "no commercial value".

Fax numbers and e-mail addresses of all *Nature* offices appear on *Nature*'s masthead, situated between the contents pages and the leading article in each issue.

Revised versions should be sent electronically via www.nature.com/submit/ when possible, and include the manuscript reference number. If not possible, they should be sent by mail (one hard copy plus disk, both labelled with the manuscript reference number). All revised papers should be accompanied by one copy of the authors' response to the referees' and editors' comments.

4. Format of Articles and Letters. Contributions should be presented in the sequence: title, text, methods, references, acknowledgements, tables, figure legends, figures. Contributors should refer to recent issues of *Nature* for details of format, and use the guidelines below.

4.1 Titles do not exceed three lines of 30 characters each (including spaces), and do not normally include numbers, acronyms, abbreviations or punctuation (other than a colon if essential).

4.2 Text. Length limits are specified in terms of the number of pages in *Nature*. An uninterrupted page of text contains about 1,300 words, so a typical Letter to *Nature*, occupying 2.5 pages, contains about 1,500 words of text (including the first paragraph of Letters but excluding figure legends and the methods section if applicable) and four small display items (figures and/or tables) with brief legends (see [4.8](#) for instructions on sizing figures).

Authors should state the length of the main text, figure legends and methods section (if any) when submitting new or revised manuscripts.

Longer papers are sometimes allowed but only if extra space is offered by the editor handling the paper. Authors of contributions that significantly exceed the limits stated here will be asked to shorten their papers before acceptance, inevitably delaying publication.

Nature prefers authors to format their papers using an [MS Word template](#) which can be downloaded from the *Nature* website. Use of this template is strongly recommended as it reduces delays and minimizes the possibility of errors.

4.3 Methods. If the details are brief, they can be given in the text with a reference to published methods used.

Otherwise, they should be described at the end of the text in a ‘Methods’ section, subdivided by short, bold headings referring to methods used. This section should not normally exceed 800 words and should ideally be shorter.

(Methods sections are not usual in contributions in the physical sciences.)

4.4 Acknowledgements are brief and follow the reference list. *Nature* does not publish grant or contribution numbers, or thanks to anonymous referees and editors, or effusive comments.

Articles and Letters contain a statement after the acknowledgements: ‘Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to xxxxx’, with one e-mail address if desired, followed by the accession numbers or website address for supporting data sets (see [4.10](#)). The identified author should coordinate readers’ enquiries and requests for materials. When necessary, *Nature* will ask this author to handle matters arising from the published contribution. The author named as corresponding author is not necessarily the senior author, and publication of this author’s name does not imply seniority.

4.5 References are given as numbers, ordered sequentially as they appear in the text, methods, tables then figure legends.

- When cited in the text, reference numbers are superscript, not in brackets.
- The maximum number of references is 50 for Articles and 30 for Letters. Only one publication is given for each number.
- Only papers that have been published or submitted to a named publication should be in the numbered list; papers in preparation should be mentioned in the text with a list of authors (or initials if any of the authors are co-authors of the present contribution).
- Published conference abstracts and recognized preprint servers may be included in reference lists, but text, grant details and acknowledgements may not.
- All authors should be included in reference lists unless there are more than five, in which case only the first author should be given, followed by ‘*et al.*’.

Please follow the style in the published edition of *Nature* in preparing reference lists.

- Authors should be listed surname first, followed by a comma and initials of given names.

- Titles of all cited articles are required. Titles of articles cited in reference lists should be in upright, not italic text; the first word of the title is capitalized, the title written exactly as it appears in the work cited, ending with a full stop. Book titles are italic with all main words capitalized. Journal titles are italic and abbreviated according to common usage; authors can refer to *Nature*, the *Index Medicus* or the *American Institute of Physics* style manual for details.
- Volume numbers are bold. The publisher and city of publication are required for books cited. (Refer to published papers in *Nature* for details.)

4.6 Tables should each be presented on a separate page (in the case of hard copy submissions), of the same size and orientation as the rest of the contribution.

- Upright roman (not bold) type of the same size as the rest of the text is used, with a brief, one-line title in bold.
- The body of the table should not contain horizontal or vertical rules; these will be added by *Nature* when necessary after the paper has been accepted for publication.
- Symbols and abbreviations are defined immediately below the table, followed by essential descriptive material, all in double-spaced text.

4.7 Figure legends. In contributions with methods sections, each figure legend should begin with a brief title for the whole figure and continue with a short description of each panel and the symbols used; it should not contain any details of methods, or exceed 100 words.

In contributions without methods sections, each figure legend should start with a title for the figure, followed by a brief description of the panels and symbols and a description of the methods in fewer than 300 words (aiming to keep the total length of all figure legends below 800 words).

4.8 Figures should be presented on separate pages, assembled into the form they will occupy on the printed page (in the case of hard-copy submissions, of the same size and orientation as the rest of the manuscript).

- Each figure should be numbered. For hard-copy figures, each page should be marked with the figure number, the corresponding author's name and, when known, the paper's reference number.
- Production quality electronic versions of all figures, as well as hard copies, will be requested on a disk when the editor asks for a revised version of the paper (details of acceptable electronic formats appear below).

Nature prefers online submission of figures ([see 4.9](#)). If this is not possible, figures can be submitted with the hard-copy manuscript and disk, together with one set of figures in a separate, clearly marked envelope with a set of photocopies, one for each figure, arranged into a rectangular shape as they will appear in the published paper (see below for further details). Original figures should be of the highest possible quality as *Nature* will scan them into electronic form for reviewing purposes if unable to use digital files from authors' disks. Authors should specify the minimum acceptable final size of figures, together with any special requirements, such as separation distance of stereo pairs.

Unnecessary figures and parts (panels) of figures should be avoided: data presented in small tables or histograms, for instance, can generally be stated briefly in the text instead. Figures should not contain more than one panel unless the parts are logically connected; each panel of a multipart figure should be sized so that the whole figure can be reduced by the same amount and reproduced on the printed page at the smallest size at which essential details are visible.

Amino-acid sequences should be printed in one-letter code using lines of 50 or 100 characters.

In Articles and Letters, each page of *Nature* contains two columns, each 86 mm wide; a square one-column figure is equivalent to about 240 words.

- Figures are printed in a rectangular space, so figures with several parts should be assembled into a rectangular shape in the submitted paper.
- Most figures in Articles and Letters are printed at widths considerably smaller than one column, so panels should be small: two or three graphs can be placed side-by-side for reduction into one-column width, for example, and histograms are legible if each bar is 2 mm wide and each group of bars is separated by 1 mm.
- Panels representing the same type of material should be reproduced at a uniform scale and with consistent size of lettering throughout, so that the width of features (for example, gel lanes) is constant in all panels.
- It is essential to check before submission that figures and their lettering are legible when reduced to the proposed final size.
- Lettering on figures should be in a clear, sans-serif typeface (for example Arial or Helvetica); if possible, the same typeface should be used for all figures in a paper.
- Unnecessary colour, details or decorations (such as three-dimensional ‘skyscraper’ histograms) should be avoided.
- The type size and line spacing should be sufficient to remain clear on reduction to the minimum acceptable printed size, while avoiding unnecessarily large type.
- Typical sizes of lettering and lines in *Nature* figures are 8 point and 0.25 point, respectively.
- *Nature* recommends that artwork is prepared at roughly the final size needed for reproduction in the journal, and prefers to reduce figures by no more than 50%.
- Authors will see a proof of figures. Reasonable requests to enlarge figures at this stage will be considered, but *Nature* will make the final decision on figure size.

Figures divided into parts should be labelled with a lower-case, bold **a**, **b**, and so on, in the same typesize as used elsewhere in the figure.

- Lettering in figures (labelling of axes and so on) should be in lower-case type, with the first letter capitalized and no full stop.
- Units should have a single space between the number and the unit, and follow SI nomenclature or the nomenclature common to a particular field. Thousands should be separated by commas (1,000). Unusual units or abbreviations are defined in the legend.
- Scale bars should be used rather than magnification factors, with the length of the bar defined in the legend rather than on the bar itself.
- Layering type directly over shaded or textured areas (instead of creating a white box and putting the lettering within it) and using reversed type (white lettering on a black background) are best avoided, as they usually result in poor quality reproduction.
- Where possible, text, including keys to symbols, should be provided in the legend rather than on the figure itself. (See published issues of *Nature* for guidance.)

A contribution towards the cost of reproduction of colour figures is requested for Articles and Letters. Inability to pay this charge will not prevent publication of colour figures judged essential by the editors.

4.9 Electronic figure format. This section applies only to papers that have been accepted for publication. *Nature* prefers to use electronic versions of the figures to ensure optimum reproduction. (Separate guidelines are available for initial online submission at www.nature.com/nature/submit.) *Nature* can scan illustrations if the electronic files supplied are unsuitable, so please also take the guidelines into account if preparing hard copies.

Sending files. *Nature* can accept:

- Floppy
- CD-ROM
- Jaz
- Zip
- Optical (128 MB)
- Macintosh or PC formatted

Formats

- Photographic: We prefer 400+ dpi TIFF or PhotoShop v5 images (at actual size). We can accept: JPEG, EPS or DCS 1&2.
- Line art/charts/graphs: We prefer Illustrator v8 or lower (AI or EPS). We can accept: Freehand v8, Canvas v5 or v6, PDF or Postscript (level 2).

Some notes

- Provide files at approximately the correct size they are to be printed (single column is 90mm, double column is 185 mm, but the figure itself should be smaller than this if possible.).
- Provide all placed images as separate files.
- Ensure all colour artwork is converted to CMYK (where possible). If necessary we can scan RGB prints to assist colour conversions.
- Use sans-serif typefaces such as Arial or Helvetica.
- Avoid using lines with widths of less than 1 point, if this is practical.
- Scans can be made of hard copy/photographs/slides if required.
- PowerPoint/Word and Excel files can be used as long as they do not contain placed images. Such images should be provided separately.
- Some programs can generate Postscript by 'printing to file' - found in the Print dialogue.
- Please also ensure that all disks, emails and hard copies are labelled with the program/format, manuscript reference number and figure number(s).
- Please send by express mail service if *Nature* already has the final form of your text. Please declare a nil value on mailed packages so that we do not get charged at delivery. *Nature* does not return disks unless requested.

For full details and further help with preparing electronic figures, please see our [guide to preparing finalized submissions](#).

4.10 Supplementary information is material directly relevant to the conclusion of a paper which cannot be included in the printed version for reasons of space. It is peer-reviewed, and is posted on *Nature's* website at the time of publication as well as being kept in paper form in

Nature's London editorial office, when format is appropriate, for distribution to interested readers who do not have access to the Internet.

Supplementary Information is indicated in the 'Correspondence and materials' section, and is referred to at an appropriate point in the text. It cannot be altered by the author after the paper has been accepted for publication. .

It is a condition of publication that Supplementary Information must also be available directly from the paper's authors, either electronically or as hard copy, and must be freely and promptly provided to any interested reader.

Supplementary Information typically takes the form of supporting figures or tables that give essential background for the conclusions reported. Although contributors are not encouraged to submit Supplementary Information with their papers, the editor handling a contribution may on occasion suggest that part of the data could be more suitably presented in this way (often at the suggestion of the referees). In this event, authors should ask the editor for detailed guidance about preparation of Supplementary Information.

Contributions with Supplementary Information cannot be formally accepted for publication until the Supplementary Information is received by *Nature*, on a separate disk, in its final form. The disk should be clearly marked as Supplementary Information, with the file names, author's surname and manuscript number. A printed list of files, each with a brief description and format, should be provided with the disk. An identical version of the Supplementary Information must also be provided on paper (two copies).

Authors should note that Supplementary Information is not subedited by *Nature*, so they should ensure that it is clearly and succinctly presented, and that the style of terms conforms with the rest of the paper.

Text can be supplied as a file in most common formats; for graphics and other data, we can accept plain ASCII text (.txt), Acrobat files (.pdf), MS Word documents (.doc), Postscript files (.ps), Quick Time files (.mov), graphical image files (.gif), HTML files (.html), JPEG image files (.jpg), sound files (.wav), or MS Excel spreadsheet document (.xls). **We cannot accept TeX and LaTeX: if no other format is possible, please ask the manuscript editor's advice.**

File sizes must be as small as possible, so that they can be downloaded quickly. Images should be a maximum size of 640 x 480 pixels (9 x 6.8 inches at 72 pixels per inch).

The maximum number of files is eight, with a total size not normally exceeding 3 MB (but most files will be much smaller). Exceptions may be made for movie files at the editor's discretion. Please seek advice from the editor rather than sending files larger than our maximum size, to avoid delays in publication.

Authors should:

1. Include a minimal text summary (no more than 50 words) to describe the contents of each file - this may be a caption or legend;
2. Identify the types of files (program formats) that you have submitted; and
3. Ensure that Supplementary Information is referred to in the main version of the paper at an appropriate point in the text or figure/table legend, and at the end of the text under "Correspondence and materials".

Further questions about the submission or preparation of Supplementary Information can be directed to the editor handling the manuscript or to the electronic publishing department via eguide@nature.com or via general enquiries at +44 171 843 4581.

4.11 Proofs of accepted contributions should be returned to the London office. All reprint orders and enquiries should be made to the New York office (see *Nature's* masthead for address), not the London or Washington offices. Full details for ordering reprints are provided after acceptance.

5. Conditions of publication

5.1 Competing financial interests. In the interests of transparency and to help readers to form their own judgements of potential bias, *Nature* requires authors of original research papers to declare any competing financial interests in relation to the published papers. Full details of the policy can be found on <http://www.nature.com/nature/submit/competing/index.html>. The declaration is required from the corresponding authors of all accepted manuscripts received after 1 October 2001; a shortened form of the declaration is published as part of the printed paper, with a more detailed version, if appropriate, on the website. **5.2 Prepublicity.** Once submitted, contributions must not be discussed with the media (including other scientific journals) until the publication date; advertising the contents of any contribution to the media may lead to rejection. The only exception is in the week before publication, during which contributions may be discussed with the media if authors clearly indicate to journalists that their contents must not be publicized until *Nature's* press embargo has elapsed (1900 h local UK time on the day before the publication date).

Nature allows presentation and discussion of material submitted to *Nature* at scientific meetings not open to the public. Discussion of material submitted to *Nature* at meetings that are open to the media should be avoided. If unavoidable, authors must indicate that their work is subject to press embargo and decline to discuss it with members of the media. Preprints of submitted or 'in press' papers may be distributed to professional colleagues, but not to the media (but see [5.3](#)).

Occasionally, journalists and editors hear about work at talks given at scientific meetings and mention this work in meeting reports or editorials. In these cases, *Nature* will assess the extent to which authors have solicited this interest or cooperated with journalists. If, in the judgement of the *Nature* editors, *Nature's* embargo policy has been broken, the submitted paper may be rejected, even if it is technically 'in press'.

Contributions submitted to, in press with or published in *Nature* must not be posted on any website, with the following exception. Preprints may be posted on recognized preprint servers if the server is identified to the editor on submission of the paper, and if the content of the paper has not been advertised to the media (see [Nature 390, 427](#); 1997 for further details).

5.3 Press release. Once scheduled for publication, some contributions are selected by *Nature's* editors for inclusion in the weekly press release. This provides a brief summary, together with contact details for the authors, and is distributed to registered journalists a week before the publication date, solely for the purpose of publicizing the work in the media. These journalists are permitted to show papers to independent specialists of their own choosing a few days in advance of publication, again under embargo conditions, solely for the purpose of eliciting comments on the work described.

Authors of accepted contributions scheduled for publication may also arrange their own publicity, but they must strictly adhere to *Nature's* press embargo (see [5.2](#)). Authors are advised to coordinate their own publicity with *Nature's* press office, in the first instance by sending an e-mail to press@nature.com.

5.4 Materials and data. As a condition of publication, authors are required to make materials and methods used freely available to academic researchers for their own use. Authors are required to state in the methods section any conditions for use of materials, and to provide full disclosure of the conditions on a freely accessible, identified website.

This requirement includes antibodies and the constructs used to make transgenic animals, but not the animals themselves. Mutant strains of mice generated without the use of constructs must be submitted to a public repository at the time of publication, unless authors can ensure prompt distribution to academic researchers on request.

For original research manuscripts (Articles, Letters and Brief Communications) reporting experiments on live vertebrates and/or higher invertebrates, authors must include in the methods section (or for contributions without methods sections, at the end of the text), a brief statement identifying the institutional and/or licensing committee approving the experiments. Papers reporting protein or DNA sequences and crystallographic structures will not be accepted without an accession number to Genbank/EMBL/DDBJ, Brookhaven, SWISS-PROT or other appropriate, identified, publicly available database in general use in the field that gives free access to researchers from the date of publication (see *Nature* [394, 105; 1998](#) and [404, 317; 2000](#)). Accession numbers are provided directly to authors by these databases on deposition of data, and must be included in the *Nature* paper before publication. Microarray data should be made freely available to academic researchers on authors' own Web sites or other freely available Web site (the URL to be provided in the paper) until a public database is available.

Other supporting data sets must be made available to any interested reader on the publication date from the authors directly.

6. Presubmission enquiries

Presubmission enquiries are not required for Articles or Letters to *Nature*, and can be difficult to assess reliably. Editors prefer to judge an entire paper rather than a presubmission enquiry. As a matter of policy, *Nature* editors cannot make an absolute commitment to have a contribution refereed before seeing the entire paper, so authors are advised to submit the full paper for consideration.

If, however, a contributor wishes to make a presubmission enquiry **for an Article or Letter to Nature only**, it should be sent via the [presubmission enquiry form](#) on the *Nature* web site. Presubmission enquiries for other sections of the journal can be made direct by email to nature@nature.com, citing the section concerned in the subject line (see section 7 below).

The Article or Letter to *Nature* presubmission enquiry must include authors' names, corresponding author's address and contact details; title of paper; brief paragraph to the editor stating the interest to a broad scientific readership; a fully referenced summary paragraph in *Nature* format; and a list of references cited in the summary paragraph. Presubmission enquiries must not be sent to other publications while under consideration by *Nature*.

Nature cannot guarantee the speed of response, but authors will usually receive an answer within two working days.

When *Nature* declines to consider a paper on the basis of a presubmission enquiry, editors will not enter into further discussion about this decision. Authors who have received a negative response are not excluded from formally submitting their paper.

7. Other contributions published in *Nature*

Nature publishes original research, mainly in the form of Articles and Letters. It publishes other submitted material in the following formats. Contributors to any of these sections are advised to read the relevant section of published issues of *Nature* to gain an idea of how to present their work, as well as reading the guidelines below, before submission.

All articles for all sections of *Nature* are considered according to our usual conditions, including being subject to our embargo (see [5.2](#)). All material is considered for publication on the

understanding that it is original and that any similar or related material submitted or in press elsewhere is disclosed to *Nature* at submission.

Authors of material submitted to any section of *Nature* must provide a current full postal address, phone, fax and e-mail address.

7.1 Correspondence. These items are short comments on topical issues, anecdotal material or reactions of readers to informal material published in *Nature* (for example News reports, Book Reviews). They are not technical comments, which should be submitted to Brief Communications (see [7.6](#)). *Nature* editors decide the section for which a submitted contribution is in principle suitable.

Correspondence items can be published very quickly. They are usually 500 words or shorter. Submissions should be by e-mail to corres@nature.com (with accents on names and places clearly indicated). Contributions are not usually peer-reviewed, but *Nature* will seek the informal advice of reviewers when necessary.

Contributors should ensure they provide a full postal address, e-mail, phone and fax number, including full current contact details if the author is not at his or her usual address after submission. Proofs are sent by e-mail.

Correspondence should not be confused with the Brief Communications section (see [7.6](#)), which is for peer-reviewed, technical and scientific material. The Correspondence editor refers submitted material to Brief Communications if it is not appropriate in principle for Correspondence.

7.2 Commentary. These articles are journalistic, persuasive, stimulating and often controversial comments on topical issues of public interest that have some bearing on scientific research. They are written at a level accessible to readers who are not researchers themselves but who are interested in research. Unsolicited manuscripts are considered, but short proposals in the form of a one-paragraph synopsis are preferred, made to the Commentary editor by e-mail (nature@nature.com), with "Commentary proposal" and the author's name as the subject. Single-author articles are preferred as this is an "opinion" section of the journal. Further details of format and editorial advice will be provided by the Commentary editor after submission of the synopsis.

The ideal Commentary will convey a sense of immediacy; be relevant to an issue of current international concern; will present a novel perspective on topical events; and will make specific, practical proposals, either setting an agenda or proposing better alternatives to a perceived negative state of affairs.

Key points are:

- Articles should begin with the "news", starting with a short paragraph containing the message of the article in simple language.
- Articles should not contain specialist terminology, and should be written at the level of an article in a good newspaper.
- Controversial articles are welcomed, but the text should make explicit that a particular argument is controversial, and refer to the generally accepted view for nonspecialist readers' information.
- Commentaries fit an integral number of *Nature* pages, generally one page (1,000 words plus one small figure) or two pages (2,000 words plus two small figures).

- Figures or other types of illustration are desirable. *Nature* can obtain pictures from photo libraries if necessary, but prefers to use authors' own artwork. Authors' colour artwork can be reproduced free of charge.
- References should be kept to a minimum, ideally fewer than 10. Reference style is as for Letters and Articles (see section [4.5](#)), but titles of cited articles are not required.
- All articles are subject to *Nature's* usual conditions of publication and embargo conditions (see section [5.2](#)).
- Authors of published articles are sent a complimentary copy of the issue in which their article is published with a reprint order form. Authors of articles containing colour pictures can order reprints containing black-and-white versions at the black-and-white price.
- Essays, theories, hypotheses, philosophical articles, timeless accounts and unfocused arguments are not considered, nor are reviews and analyses of published material

When *Nature* is unable to consider a submitted Commentary or synopsis, detailed reasons cannot be given.

7.3 Book Reviews. Unsolicited contributions are not considered.

7.4 Essays and other occasional articles. *Nature* publishes occasional essays, which are commissioned. *Nature* occasionally publishes unsolicited contributions to these sections, but frequently does not. Readers interested in contributing to these series should send an enquiry to nature@nature.com, giving the title of the essay series and their name as the subject, and include a one-paragraph synopsis of the proposed essay and any other relevant information, including a full address and email. *Nature* cannot give details when declining such suggestions, nor when declining unsolicited contributions.

7.5 News and Views. These articles inform nonspecialist readers about new scientific advances, as reported either in recently published papers (in *Nature* and elsewhere) or at scientific meetings.

Most are commissioned, but proposals can be made to one of the News and Views editors via nature@nature.com before the paper is published or the meeting takes place. Once a News and Views editor has said that a complete article will be considered, these guidelines should be followed in writing it:

- Authors are not allowed to discuss work in which they are involved or work from their own or colleagues' institutions.
- There should be no more than two authors per article.
- Articles should be within the length limits given by the News and Views editor, usually 800-900 words.
- **Titles** should contain no punctuation marks or abbreviations. News and Views articles also carry a 'strapline' of one or two words to define the general subject area of the article, and a sentence to summarize the message of the article in simple language. The title and strapline are finalized by discussion between author and editor.
- The 'news' should be mentioned in a succinct opening paragraph to attract the attention of those who are not experts in the field. This paragraph should explicitly refer to the paper or meeting under discussion and touch on the significance of the new work.

- More detail, background and explanation should follow, including the author's own 'views'. The text is often best rounded off with comment on the implications of the new work and on future research directions.
- Articles should not read like textbooks: most readers will have a general scientific background but specialized terminology should be avoided.
- **Diagrams** should be used to explain the new points made, or the background science to the new result. Authors' sketches can be redrawn by *Nature*, and can be reproduced in colour free of charge. Suggestions of other illustrative material, black-and-white or colour, informative or decorative, are welcome. Final artwork should be prepared in one of *Nature's* readable electronic formats, see section [4.9](#) for details.
- **References** should be kept to a minimum, ideally fewer than ten. They should be given superscript numbers and cited sequentially in the text. If the News and Views article is to accompany a paper in the same issue of *Nature*, the paper should be given a formal reference and be referred to in the text in the form ". . . on page xxx of this issue¹ . . .". References should be listed at the end of the article in the usual *Nature* style (see section [4.5](#)) but without the titles of citations.
- **Acknowledgements** are not allowed, nor are grant and other numbers.
- **Fees**. A modest fee is paid for all News and Views articles published. If you are unable to accept the fee, please let us know so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- **Meetings**. A full guide to writing meeting reports is available on request via nature@nature.com.

7.6 Brief Communications is a peer-reviewed, relatively informal section of *Nature*. It is *vastly* oversubscribed; more than 90 per cent of contributions are returned without review because of *Nature's* very limited space for this section. Presubmission enquiries are not considered, nor can the editors enter into details about rejected contributions.

The following types of contribution are published.

- Short reports of a novel, topical finding of general interest, usually needing only one small figure or table. Contributions of this type are often submitted as Letters and are shortened at the editor's suggestion and after advice from referees.
- Comments on original research papers or other technical material published in *Nature* (see below).
- Communication of preliminary results of exceptional interest that are particularly topical and relevant, and for which fast publication is essential.
- A scientific perspective on a topical issue of international public interest.

Contributions can be submitted as Word documents, with figures as JPEGs, **with a combined limit no greater than 3 MB and ideally much smaller**, by e-mail to briefcomms@nature.com, or as hard copy and disk by mail to the Brief Communications editor. They should:

- Be no more than 500 words long, or 700 words if there is no figure or table.
- Titles must be brief. They may be changed on acceptance by the editors for space or other reasons. Authors will be consulted about title changes but *Nature* will make the final decision.
- Contributions should start with a two- or three-sentence paragraph that summarizes the message of the article without specialized terminology.

- Brief Communications contributions should have a simple message that requires only one small figure or table. Contributions with multiple or complex figures and/or tables will not be considered.
- Figures and tables should be sized so that they can be reduced to single-column width (56 mm). See [4.9](#) for formats and resolution: 150 dots per inch is usually sufficient resolution for editorial peer-review. Enquiries can be sent to briefcomms@nature.com.
- Contributions should not have more than 10 references (ideally fewer); reference style is as section [4.5](#) but titles of articles are not required. All other rules about references are as for Articles and Letters: only one reference to be cited per reference number, and reference numbers in the text are superscript.
- Acknowledgements and joint first authors are not allowed.

Authors must provide contact details including those if they are not at their usual address. (Current phone, e-mail and fax numbers.)

Instructions to authors who wish to submit comments on material published in *Nature* (Communications Arising)

When submitting a technical comment on a recent paper published in *Nature*, please bear in mind the following **additional** points to those detailed above:

- Contributions should be written to be comprehensible to nonspecialists: lists of technical points are not appropriate for publication. They should pertain to the main point of the published paper and should not concern relatively unimportant points. They should be focused articles.
- Comments should be sent to the authors of the paper under discussion before submission to *Nature*, so that disputes can be resolved directly whenever possible and points where both parties agree removed from the submitted contribution. It is reasonable to allow 2 weeks for the original authors to respond. When a contribution is submitted to *Nature*, copies of correspondence with the original authors should be enclosed for the editor's information, even if the original author has failed to respond, otherwise delays are likely to occur. If a comment has not been sent to the original author, the reason should be explained to *Nature* in a brief cover letter.
- The Brief Communications editor will decide how to proceed on the basis of whether the central conclusion of the earlier paper is brought into question; of the length of time since the original publication; and of whether a comment or exchange of views is likely to seem of interest to nonspecialist readers. Because *Nature* receives far more comments than there is space to publish, those that do not meet these criteria are referred to the specialist literature.
- Complaints. Important complaints pertaining to published Articles and Letters to *Nature* should be submitted to Brief Communications, although those endorsed after editorial discussion and peer-review are published as corrections at the end of Letters to *Nature*, not as Brief Communications.
- Manuscripts presenting preliminary data that confirm, extend or contradict part of a published paper are not considered for Brief Communications, unless they concern a matter of exceptional interest.
- Comments that meet *Nature's* criteria are sent to the authors of the original paper for a response, depending on the editor's judgement, and to an independent referee. (The referees are usually sent the response.) To avoid unnecessary delays, the original authors

are given a deadline of two weeks to respond. The response is not a referee's report, but is helpful to the editor in making a decision about publication of the comment and/or a reply. The responders must, however, keep the comment confidential and must not use it for their own research or for any other purpose apart from replying to the comment. If the *Nature* author does not respond within two weeks of receipt of the comment, the editor will proceed without the response. Late responses may not be considered for publication.

Responses are published only when they add to the debate, and not when they reiterate points already made in print. They should not contain figures or new data, but be confined to replying to the specific issue raised about the published paper.

- All contributions should be measured in tone, and should not contain inflammatory or otherwise intemperate language.
- Articles accepted for publication will be required in electronic form, by e-mail or disk.
- Authors of comments will see a proof of their own contribution but not of the response (if a response is being published). Responders will see a proof of the whole exchange but are not permitted to alter the comment.

7.7 Insight, Review and Progress articles. *Nature* publishes two kinds of review, Review Articles and Progress articles. It also publishes commissioned collections of Review and Progress articles as Insight supplements, approximately six times a year. For further information about Insights, contact the Insights Editor via nature@nature.com

- Review Articles survey recent developments in a topical area of scientific research or, on occasion, can be more wide-ranging. They do not generally occupy more than 6 pages of *Nature*.
- Progress articles are shorter reviews of topical and fast-moving fields, and do not exceed 4 pages of *Nature*.

Most articles are commissioned, but authors wishing to submit an unsolicited Review or Progress must first send a presubmission enquiry in the form of a brief synopsis to the Reviews editor at nature@nature.com.

The synopsis should outline the basic structure of the article; list the material to be covered with an indication of the proposed depth of coverage; and indicate how the material will be logically arranged. The synopsis should be accompanied by a 300-500 word outline of the background to the topic which summarizes the progress made to date. Synopses prepared at this level of detail enable *Nature's* editors to provide editorial input before they commission the article, and can reduce the need for substantial editorial revisions at a later stage.

- Reviews inform a broad readership about fields in which there have been recent, important advances.
- They focus on one topical aspect of a field rather than providing a comprehensive literature survey.
- They can be controversial, but in this case should briefly indicate opposing viewpoints. They should not be focused on the author's own work. Language should be simple, novel concepts defined and specialist terminology explained.
- Reviews should not generally be more than 6 pages long. There should be no more than 100 references and ideally half that number. Display items and explanatory boxes (used for explanation of technical points or background material) are welcomed.
- Review Articles are peer-reviewed, and are substantially edited by *Nature's* editors in consultation with the author.

Progress articles are similar in format to Reviews except for the following:

- They do not occupy more than 4 pages of *Nature*, including display items and references.
- They focus on current papers of outstanding interest that are setting new standards in a field.
- Because of their topicality, Progress articles should be written and submitted within a few weeks of *Nature's* editors expressing interest in a synopsis.
- Authors may discuss their own work, but should make it clear in the text if they are presenting a personal, rather than a consensus, view.
- Titles are brief (generally a single line) and relatively informal.

Progress articles are peer-reviewed and edited substantially by *Nature's* editors in consultation with the author.

8. Research journals

The *Nature* Publishing Group publishes *Nature* (weekly) and seven monthly journals: [Nature Biotechnology](#), [Nature Cell Biology](#), [Nature Genetics](#), [Nature Immunology](#), [Nature Medicine](#), [Nature Neuroscience](#) and [Nature Structural Biology](#). In 2002, the journal *Nature Materials* will be launched.

For more information about the relationship between *Nature* and the research journals, and other *Nature* Publishing Group publications, see "[Guide to Nature and its related journals](#)".