

Editorial

AALAS Publications: Write for All Readers

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For the AALAS journals *JAALAS* and *Comparative Medicine*, responding to peer reviewers' comments isn't the last check-point before publication. Instead, all accepted articles undergo thorough scientific editing. Why? The authors and readers of AALAS journals work in many different disciplines, and each has a field-specific vocabulary that might be unfamiliar to those in other areas. Furthermore, readers of AALAS journals represent a broad range of educational backgrounds. Finally, because AALAS is an international organization, many members (and thus readers) are not native speakers of English. During scientific editing, we (as Scientific Technical Editor and Editor-in-Chief) assess whether an article effectively communicates its intended message. We then suggest revisions to promote full understanding of the work reported, regardless of a reader's scientific discipline, educational level, or English proficiency.

As we edit, we apply the following guidelines. One tip for authors: when drafting your manuscript, follow these same guidelines (and those in the journals' Information for Authors) to minimize the changes necessary during scientific editing.

- Substitute an English equivalent for nonEnglish words and phrases (for example, 'without restriction' for 'ad libitum'; 'compared with' for 'versus')
- Avoid jargon (for example, 'preclinical', 'cut-downs')
- Use nonproprietary words for products, rather than brand names (for example, 'vacuum phlebotomy tube' rather than 'Vacutainer'); provide the proprietary name only with the product's source description in the Methods section
- Limit the use of acronyms and abbreviations to multiple-word terms used at least 4 times in an article (for example, the single word 'pharmacokinetics' is not abbreviated)
- Follow correct English usage (for example, should you use 'compared with' [correct in the vast majority of cases] or 'compared to'? Do you mean 'composed' or 'comprised'?)
- Use accurate and precise terminology (for example, 'sex' rather than 'gender' [in most cases]; 'unanesthetized' or 'awake'?)
- Omit 'empty words' (for example, write 'X is Y,' not 'It has been reported that X is Y' or 'It should be noted that X is Y.' Avoid starting sentences with 'There is/are,' especially at the start of a paragraph.)
- Eliminate redundant text (for example, 'euthanized,' not 'humanely euthanized') and potentially inflammatory or

emotional language (for example, 'exposed to,' not 'subjected to'; 'cardiocentesis,' not 'cardiac puncture')

- Delete unnecessary or nonscientific modifiers (for example, 'interestingly,' 'surprisingly').

Also during this round of editing, we format text to comply with 'AALAS journal style.' Style guidelines address (among other things) how to apply italics, capitalization, and punctuation. AALAS journal style is based on *Scientific Style and Format*, 8th edition, from the Council of Science Editors. For example, *P* (uppercase, italicized) is used to indicate statistical significance in the text, whereas single, unique symbols (for example, † [not **] for ' $P < 0.01$ ') are used in figures. We insist on style consistency because it is a key factor in readability: comprehension is more rapid when all occasions of a particular type of information (such as *P* values) are displayed in the same way throughout an article.

To ensure that your edited article is acceptable for publication, provide all additional information requested in the returned Word file. In addition, confirm that all changes to the text accurately retain its intended meaning. When a suggested revision is inaccurate or incorrect, reword it as needed to clarify. Merely reverting to the original text is not helpful: given that the editors found it incomplete or unclear in the first place, chances are that many readers will too. Another tip: do not paste in text from another document. Doing so overrides journal-specific formatting and delays the article's progress until formatting is corrected. Similarly, do not revise such formatting to reflect your personal preference.

Both the Scientific Technical Editor and Editor-in-Chief are highly experienced writers and editors. We are keenly cognizant of the need to retain the authors' meaning and voice, and our revisions largely focus on correcting grammar, improving clarity, and formatting to journal style. As authors ourselves, we understand the monumental effort that a submitted manuscript represents—and the reluctance to accept that it still warrants improvement! However, we encourage you to view our suggestions, comments, and changes objectively and constructively, because they are intended in part to help you to become a better, more effective writer.

Most important, remember that you, the author, are writing for the readers: sometimes what is abundantly clear to you might be ambiguous to the rest of us.