

# Organic Process Research & Development

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## *Editorial*

### Getting it Right, or Write Right

What is the first thing you notice when reading an article? Usually it requires reading the first several paragraphs to appreciate the concept of the work, even more to gather insights on the theory or to understand the conclusions of the work. The first thing I tend to notice is the skill of the writer. Does the author compose useful metaphors or display a crisp style to forward the ideas? Is efficient language evident? Is there an absence of overused words or phrases? Or instead, does one find inelegant constructions, awkward phrasing, or even outright errors?

Unfortunately, the reviewers of many scientific journals are finding not enough of the former and plenty of the latter in recent submissions. This continues to surprise me. Why are such documents leaving prestigious companies and universities? Why would anyone with the resources to weave a well-written story to showcase their science not do so? This is the point of this editorial—a call for prospective authors to double, triple, and quadruple proofread their manuscripts before submission.

While good writing should be a source of pride to any author, my concern goes beyond that. Trevor and I have a skilled and dedicated cadre of reviewers, literally some of the best scientists in the world. I value their time and dedication to reviewing manuscripts for *Org. Process Res. Dev.* and am jealous of any activity that detracts from this object. Discouragingly, our referees frequently complain of subpar writing, difficult-to-follow arguments, and simple errors. It is challenging to keep quality reviewers for this crucial work if they are forced to focus on correcting the English to the point of understanding the science before they can evaluate the science.

Thus, I am asking all future authors to avoid the practice of submitting first drafts or what certainly seem to constitute first drafts. Perhaps the senior management of our companies could institute an informal review process to increase the clarity of

their manuscripts? At least, make sure that the worst errors have been purged. Ideally, purge all errors. English is not the first language for many of us, including myself, but if this fact compromises the ability to construct a readable paragraph, enlist the assistance of your colleagues. They will be flattered that you consider their language skills superior. Better yet, recruit two or five of them to mark up your manuscript. Then rewrite it using the best ideas and send that manuscript back to them. And needless to say, there are spelling, grammar, and thesaurus checking programs. The American Chemical Society Publications Division has researched, compiled, and posted a list of good language editing services for all authors to refer to in honing their manuscript submissions—available at <http://pubs.acs.org/paragonplus/tools/language.html>.

We have usually returned the worst manuscripts for further correction when it became clear that extensive further proofreading was required, and we hope to use this editorial to encourage our authors to invest a little extra time towards making our peer review process work better. In return, we know that this will provide faster turnaround times on our part. In our case, one of the strengths of *Org. Process Res. Dev.* is that our authors also constitute a large percentage of our referees. This is not just an esoteric fact; it displays the intense interest that our process family shows toward maintaining the high standards of the only process chemistry-orientated journal. May I ask all nascent authors to dedicate themselves to assembling the best manuscript they can, making use of all the resources they can. Isn't it rewarding to be known not only as an excellent scientist but also as a creative wordsmith?

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