**Communication and Style + Writing an Abstract**

Purpose

* Communicate your experiment to the reader/reviewer.
* Poor communication may result in the reader misinterpreting your experiment or dismissing your ideas.
* Your writing should be:
  + Clear - You want the reader to fully understand your experiment.
  + Interesting - You want the reader to be sufficiently engaged with your manuscript so that they want to keep reading.
  + Convincing - You want the reader to believe that your predictions and interpretations are reasonable.

Writing a Clear and Concise Manuscript

* Organize information so that the reader is not forced to skip forward or back in the manuscript to understand information.
  + Make sure that your thoughts flow in a logical manner; one thought should lead into the next.
  + Use paragraphs to separate different thoughts.
* Avoid undefined pronouns (instances in which a pronoun could refer to more than one noun).
  + “The body is covered by a cuticle, but **it** is unwaxed.”
  + “Tropical countries are home to both venomous and nonvenomous snakes. **They** kill their prey by constriction or by biting and swallowing them.”
* Avoid using unnecessary jargon (big, science-sounding words).
  + Readers can usually tell that you’re trying to sound “smart”.
  + Write as simply as you can while still communicating scientific ideas.
  + Use scientific terminology only when it makes the writing more clear or concise.
* Ensure that your writing is grammatically correct and contains no spelling mistakes.
  + Poor grammar and spelling mistakes can be confusing, distracting, and can erode trust in your ideas.
  + Have every member of your team review the manuscript.
* Be sure that your writing is concise.
  + Communicate the information in as few words as possible.
  + Remove any “fluff” sentences that don’t contribute to your message.

Writing an Abstract

* The abstract is a summary of your manuscript.
  + You should focus on communicating the most important information from the manuscript.
    - Introduction: 1-2 sentences that summarize the background; you should usually focus on the study species and previous similar studies
    - One sentence that states what you are testing.
    - Methods: 1-2 sentences that summarize the procedure. Don’t be overly specific; you should give the reader a general idea of the procedure, while avoiding detail.
    - Results: 1-2 sentences that describe the overall trends you observed in the results. Don’t include any raw data.
    - One sentence that summarizes your interpretations of your results.
  + Do not include anything in the abstract that isn’t included in the manuscript.
    - Consequently, you shouldn’t need to cite your references in the abstract.
* You want the abstract to serve as a “sneak peek” for the manuscript, so a reader knows if the manuscript will be relevant to their literature search.
  + Consider what you’d want out of an abstract, and include that information!