

I. GENERAL PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Writing is considered a “threshold skill” in chemistry, as it is the essential way chemists communicate with readers. Chemists ask questions about the physical world, consult the existing chemical literature for clues to answer these questions, design and implement experiments to answer questions, and communicate their results to others. Chemists present data clearly, interpret results thoroughly, and cite previous peer-reviewed work frequently. When chemists wish to include their results in the chemical literature, a research article is written which is then peer-reviewed by experts in the field. Chemists use clear, direct language in their writing. They may create arguments intended to persuade or convince readers that, for example, what the writer does is important and deserves funding and that the researchers are competent and credible. Audiences include other chemists, professors, students, the general public, fellow professionals at conferences and conventions, and grant-funding agencies.

II. TYPES OF WRITING

- Lab notebooks
- Research articles
- Lab reports
- Literature reviews
- Proposals
- Poster presentations
- Magazine articles

III. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- Data from studies and surveys
- Observations and measurements of specimens and experiments
- Data from other published reports
- Quantitative and qualitative data

IV. WRITING CONVENTIONS

- Writing should be clear, precise, concise, and objective.
- Use gender-neutral words.
- Use strong verbs and avoid “to be” verbs.
- Use active voice for notebooks and presentations.
- Use passive voice for formal lab reports and research proposals.
- Use past tense for lab reports.
- Avoid direct quotations; paraphrase instead.
- Avoid personal pronouns in reports, proposals, and poster presentations.

V. CITATION STYLE

- APA (American Psychological Association)