

COUNTERPOINT

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COUNTERPOINT STYLE GUIDE

VERSION 3.1

A GUIDE FOR COUNTERPOINT
AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS



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ABOUT THIS STYLE GUIDE

- This style guide introduces our philosophy for writing for an *educational* versus a *scientific* journal. It is not intended to be a list of *Do's & Don'ts*. See the Checklist on Page 13.
- We know that you are already an accomplished writer, and have your own linguistic style. However, we want to have a *conversational* style in *Counterpoint*. Please write with clarity in mind, and feel free to add a bit of style and fair, too.
- *When in doubt, write as you normally would write.*

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The Counterpoint Style Guide Version 3.1

Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in contributing to *Counterpoint – The Journal of Science and the Law*. The focus of *Counterpoint* is to provide clear and concise information on scientific and investigative issues to *legal* professionals, some who face challenges when it comes to interpreting *scientific* writings. To that end, we offer this Style Guide to provide a sense of form, style, and level of complexity. If you don't have time for this guide, the Checklist on Page 13 should get you going.

In fact, this Style Guide follows the *style guide*, itself. This guide perhaps uses more bullet points in the discussion than an actual article, but it demonstrates the recommended style you should use when creating your submission. Hopefully, by following this Style Guide, your article will convey scientific or investigative concepts concisely, and with clarity.

Counterpoint presents ideas that have already been published in peer-reviewed technical literature. Although we may choose to publish new theories or results or original research, our focus is primarily educational in nature. In general, we will follow the Style Guide of the *American Chemical Society* (ACS). However, keep in mind that *Counterpoint* is an *educational* journal - not a *scientific* one. Your readers are not necessarily well versed in scientific, medical, or forensic terminology or conventions. Therefore, we should avoid jargons and equations as much as reasonably possible. As an educational journal, all terminology, expressions, measurement units, and abbreviations should be explained upon their first introduction.

Style

Dr. Steven Pinker, a Harvard professor of Psychology & Linguistics, and popular science author, has authored a style guide¹ based upon modern research in cognition and linguistics. He suggests three reasons why style still matters in writing:

1. First, it ensures that writers will get their message across, sparing readers from squandering their precious moments on earth deciphering opaque prose...
2. Second, style earns trust. If readers can see that a writer cares about consistency and accuracy in (their) prose, they will be reassured that the writer cares about those virtues in conduct they cannot see as easily...
3. Style, not least, adds beauty to the world. To the literate reader, a crisp sentence, an arresting metaphor, a witty aside, an elegant turn of phrase are among life's greatest pleasures (Pinker, 2014).

So, don't be afraid to add a little flair, and perhaps even a little style... Our (adult, professional, and very busy) readers are telling us they are having fun learning science – So let's not ruin a good thing!

¹ Pinker, Steven. *The Sense of Style*; Viking Penguin, New York. 2014; LOC 167-168.

Titles

Please provide neutral titles for your articles. We prefer “*An Examination of Breath Alcohol Testing Principles*” to “*Breath Tests – Why they go WRONG!*” We are trying to establish a neutral atmosphere where both sides of an issue receive fair and impartial examination, discussion, and treatment. The journal’s title – *Counterpoint* – reflects presenting *both* sides of an issue, fairly, and without bias.

Suggested Layout

Counterpoint is distributed in electronic format, and is read on multiple electronic devices, from tablets and iPads to laptops, desktops, and smartphones. Physical formatting will focus on distribution for electronic devices. Due to this “*distribution on demand*” format, readability becomes critical. Shorter paragraph structure works better on electronic devices. We learned this while collaborating with *The New York Times*... and if it’s good enough for *The Times*...

The length of feature articles may vary. *We will target the average length of each article at approximately 800 - 1500 words.* We recognize that most readers have little time to fully penetrate the contents of an article. Keep in mind that the average attention span of a working professional is about 10 minutes. This Style Guide is 3439 words, as an example. *In other words, too long...*

Any articles longer than 2000 - 2500 words are probably best suited by splitting them into two or more parts. From an educational perspective, splitting the papers actually *increases* retention. The process is called “chunking”, where information is broken down into bite-sized pieces. Cognitive researchers have long known that when a learner’s *working memory* is full, the excess information simply can’t be absorbed.

Continuing education of conceptually related information assists the learner in developing and retaining new ideas over time. Splitting a lengthy article into two or more parts actually creates an educational advantage. We want the writing of each sentence, paragraph, subsection, figure description or caption to be coherent, and presented as a readily digestible nugget of information. Clarity is key.

Although not required for every article, we will try and adopt the following format:

Abstract (*About this Article*)

- A description of the article’s contents and importance, in about 50-100 words.

Introduction

- More than just an overview, the Introduction should provide a reason to the reader to read the article, pay attention and why the information is important professionally.

Main Heading(s) and Body Text Discussion

- We will incorporate *pull quotes* in highlighted boxes.

Results of Findings, if any

Conclusions

- This should refer to the introductory section, creating a holistic experience.

Acknowledgments, if required

- **References** - *Mandatory – See next section*

References

We will follow ACS reference guidelines, as the reader will undoubtedly be referring back to ACS-styled journal articles. We would prefer that references included in the text be cited with the author's surname and date of publication i.e. - (Adams, 2009). The recommended format for citations is as follows:

Periodicals and Journal Articles

Author 1; Author 2; *et al* as required. *Title of Article*. Journal Abbreviation, Year; Volume, Inclusive Pagination.

Books

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Chapter Title. *Book Title*, Edition Number; Series Information (if any); Publisher: Place of Publication, Year; Volume Number, Inclusive Pagination.

If you are currently using another format – SO BE IT! Formatting citations typically causes extreme levels of discomfort in the *glutemus maximus*. We don't want you NOT submitting because you have numerous citations in another format.

Submission Guidelines

For ease of reference, we've included a checklist for submissions on Page 13.

Please submit manuscripts in Microsoft word (.doc or .docx) format. Apple Pages is also acceptable. Portable Document Files (.pdf) are not acceptable, as they cannot be easily edited. And for the guy who mailed us his article, longhand, on napkins.... *Thank you???*

You may use any Word document template you wish that incorporate Headings, Body Text, Captions, and Footnotes. We will reformat to our specifications.

Please use *Footnotes* rather than *Endnotes* when inserting references (due to scrolling issues with various electronic readers).

Please use italics sparingly. We will use italics to:

- Ask a question of the reader.
- Use a phrase from a language other than English.
- Identify a newly introduced term, upon first use.
- To emphasize a specific word to enhance clarity or meaning.
- To compare and contrast two words.
- For the formal titles of periodicals, books, or newspapers.
- To indicate variables in a formula.

As an example, " $PV=nRT$,
Where P is pressure, V is Volume..."



In order to enhance clarity and readability, we prefer the following:

- **Active Voice vs. Passive Voice**
 - You should write your article using a voice that makes you comfortable. Contrary to style guides that originated in the 19th century, both *active* and *passive* voices have respective educational merits.
- **Conversational Style**
 - Whenever possible, please write in a *conversational* style, as opposed to an *academic* style. As with most newspapers, the writing level should be at about the grade 6-8 level, for ease of readability.²
 - Again, the focus is clarity, ease of access to information, and education.
- **Verb Tense**
 - Use the appropriate verb tense:
 - Simple past tense for what was done
 - “We obtained simultaneous breath and blood samples...”
 - Present tense for a statement of facts
 - “We know that ethanol affects the *Central Nervous System* (CNS).”
- **First Person Voice**
 - Please write your article in a first person voice:
 - “Smith reported XYZ, but I (or we) found ABC...”
 - Please do not use the term “*the writer*.”
- **Slang and Jargon**
 - For the sake of clarity, we should avoid the use of slang, jargon or unexplained acronyms:
 - All acronyms must be defined upon first use: i.e. – *Gastroesophageal Reflux Disorder* (GERD). After the initial use, the acronym may be used for the rest of the article. “Persons experiencing GERD often...”
 - The use of contractions isn’t necessarily encouraged, but is acceptable, as it leads to a more conversational style.
 - *Slang, however, will date your article in the most gnarly way, Dude!*



² When in doubt, consider that we will be translating the sub-set language of “English (Scientist)” into “English (Lawyer)”. *We may need a Google translation app...*

- **Gender Neutral Language**

- Of course, politically appropriate language is *de rigueur*.
 - “People working under these conditions” is **CORRECT**;
 - “Men working...” is **NOT**.
- “They” is preferred to “he or she”
- Please do not use terms like “manpower”, “man-made”, or “wife”. Instead, terms like “workforce”, “manufactured” or “spouse” are preferred.

- **Spelling**

- As per the ACS Standard, we will use the *Merriam-Webster’s New World College Dictionary* for spelling.
 - Generally speaking, if Microsoft’s Spell Check squiggles it red, it’s probably wrong. However Spell Check doesn’t have a wide vocabulary of scientific or medical terms.
- Scientific terms will follow spelling as provided in *ACS Appendix 9-1*.
- Either American or Canadian Standard English spellings are acceptable, according to the “home language” of the author.³

- **Use of the Serial (or Oxford) Comma**

- In order to resolve ambiguity issues, we recommend the use of the *Serial (or Oxford) Comma*. For example, a list of three alcohols might be punctuated either as “methanol, ethanol, and isopropanol” (with the serial comma), or as “methanol, ethanol and isopropanol” (without the serial comma). *The latter might be interpreted incorrectly as a compound mixture of ethanol and isopropanol.* The *Serial Comma* used in the first example is more precise.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Common abbreviations and acronyms (NASA, FBI, NHTSA, mph, kg, psi, lbs., etc.) do not need to be explained.

We will explain all technical, medical and scientific acronyms and abbreviations upon first use in an article. As an example:

“The *Becquerel* (Bq) is the *International System of Units* (SI) derived unit of radioactivity.”

Blood Alcohol Concentrations (BAC) will be differentiated from *Breath Alcohol Concentrations* (BrAC) in their abbreviations, explained at the beginning of each article.



³ American authors are expressly prohibited from randomly placing the phrase, “Eh!” at the end of their sentences and applying for free health care.

Chemical Names

We will use the IUPAC system of naming chemicals. Therefore *ethanol* is preferred to *ethyl alcohol*. **Note that this differs from ACS style guidelines.**

***** The use of the generic term “alcohol” must only be used in reference to the family of “alcohols”, and never to refer to *ethanol*:**

“The consumption of alcohol leads to...” – **INCORRECT**

“The consumption of ethanol leads to...” – **CORRECT**

“Isopropanol, methanol, and ethanol are alcohols.” – **CORRECT**

If you are referencing any other chemicals, please include their CAS Registry Numbers.

Hyperlinks

Please refrain from using hyperlinks to external websites in the body of your text. Experience has shown that once the reader clicks a link, they simply disappear into the void of the Internet, away from our journal, your article, and all our efforts. *All that time wasted - due to a bright, shiny object...*

Hyperlinks or URLs may be provided in the Reference Section if required.

Units of Measure

We will provide measurements in the most intuitive way. In general, the SI, or Metric System will be used. However, it is entirely acceptable to discuss a measured *Breath Alcohol Concentration* (BrAC) in a 170 lb., 5'10" male, as an example. As our readership is expanding internationally, we may have to revisit this standard. Expressing velocity in *Furlongs per Fortnight* is probably not a good idea.

We have an additional issue; BAC measurements differ from country to country. As an example, American measurements refer to 0.08 grams per 100 milliliters of blood, while Canadian (and most of the rest of the world) measurements refer to 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood. Note both the difference in unit measure, and the spelling of “milliliters” versus “millilitres”.

We will accept either the internationally standardized SI spelling “millilitres” or the American spelling “milliliters”. *Using “mL” might be less confusing...*

At this point, authors are free to use either convention. We can always add a note to the reader explaining the units of measure. I’m concerned that stating both units of measure, as in “0.08 g (80 mg)” is too clunky in the text of an article and slows the reader down.

I’m interested on anyone’s thoughts on this issue.



Numbers

We will adopt the clearest format in expressing numbers:

- We will use numerals with units of measure, with a space between the numeral and the unit of measure:
 - 6 mL; 10 min; 0.08 grams; 0.08 g; 80 mg, 3.38 μ , etc.
- Spell out the numbers from 1-10 when used in a non-technical sense:
 - “This guide should take you ten minutes to read.”
 - “We tested four subjects...”
- Use numerals for amounts greater than 10:
 - “Jan is pedantic. *This guide actually took me 15 minutes to read.*”
 - “The subjects drank 12 beers over a six hour time span.”
- Scientific Notation can be used for very large numbers:
 - “Avogadro’s number is 6.023×10^{23} ”
- We recommend that in an electronic format, large numbers should be expressed with *commas* instead of *spaces*:
 - 1,234,567.89 reads more precisely than 1 234 567.89 on an iPad or tablet, as an example.
- We will use “+/-” rather than the ACS Standard “ \pm ” as we cannot guarantee this special symbol will display correctly on all electronic readers.
- Similarly, we will prepare any submitted equations as image files (.jpeg or .gif), so that they display correctly:
 - As an example, one of the original variations of *Schmigelski’s Formula*:

$$EBAC = \frac{0.806 \cdot SD \cdot 1.2}{BW \cdot Wt} - (MR \cdot DP)$$

Figure 1 – Schmigelski’s formula

Chemical Formulas and Structures

Chemical formulas & structures will also be prepared as image files to maintain their integrity. As an example, the metabolism of ethanol in humans:

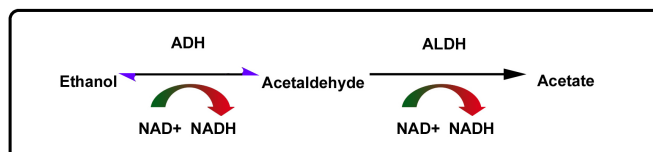


Figure 2 - The metabolic pathway of ethanol in humans

- Here is a representation of an ethanol molecule:

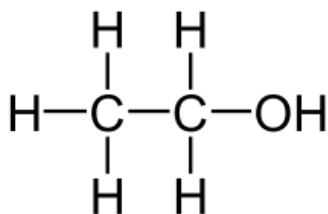


Figure 3 - The chemical structure of ethanol

Editing and Proofing

Once submitted, your article will be edited for style, clarity, and to meet our general electronic publishing requirements. Content will not be edited other than general proofing. Once technical editing is complete, you will receive an Author's Proof that you MUST review and approve in writing before final publication. We reserve the right to refuse any article.

Artwork

We will prepare chemical formulas, chemical structures, tables, graphs, photographs or illustrations as image files as required to your specifications. You will have access to our staff of professional photographers and graphic artists. You may submit samples of artwork that forms the basis of our original creations. PowerPoint or Excel submissions of charts, tables, etc. are acceptable. If you have original artwork, or photographs that are of high quality, we may use them as long as there are no copyright issues. High-resolution GIF or JPEG files are preferred. Any images that you think would enhance the article will be professionally created.

Color is better than black and white or gray shades. Half tones (gray scale) do not reproduce discernably on electronic screens. We will prepare artwork so that red-green and blue-yellow color blindness issues do not affect clarity, or cause confusion of a chart, or graph.

Original artwork created by *Counterpoint* will be prepared at our cost. You will be provided with a copy of these files for your personal or professional use.

All artwork used in articles will have a Reference Number from the text, and an appropriate Caption.

Copyright

As an author, you will retain the copyright for your submitted and published work. You agree to additionally transfer copyright to *Counterpoint* and its publisher Industrial Training & Design Ltd. as a part of our publishing agreement. We will retain copyright of

any original artwork and agree to transfer copyright of that artwork to you for your personal and professional use.

Peer Review

A number of experts have suggested setting up a peer review process as a value-added component of *Counterpoint*. We are certainly in favor of this notion. Once we get the journal up and running, we will revisit this idea and start the process. As such, please forward to me any names of possible participants you've encountered "from either side of the aisle" who may be interested in contributing and participating in *Counterpoint*.

Final Thoughts

We feel this journal is timely, necessary, and a welcome resource for readers. Thank you again for your interest in contributing to *Counterpoint*. Please contact me either by e-mail or on our toll-free number (888-470-6620) if you have any further questions or comments.

Regards,



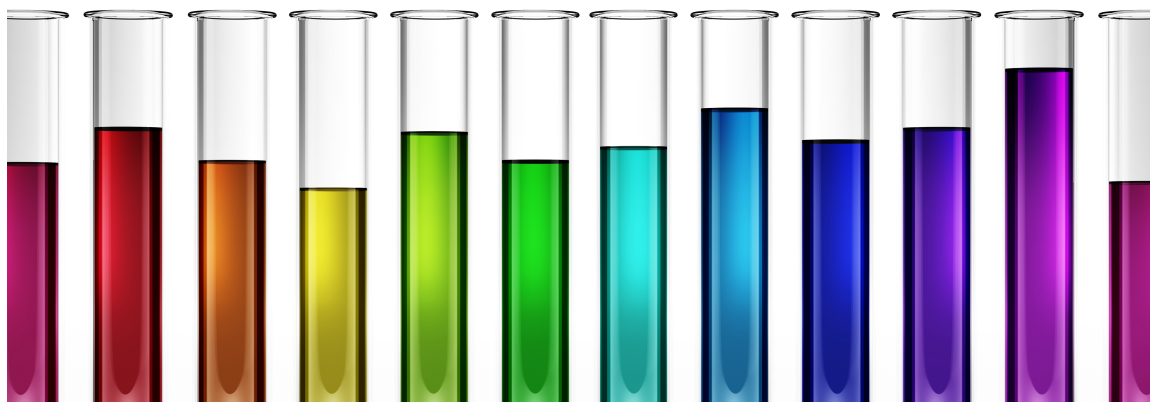
Jan Semenov, B. A., EMA,
Forensic Criminalist
Editor-in-Chief



References

Pinker, Steven. *The Sense of Style*; Viking Penguin, New York, 2014; LOC 167-168.

Dodd, J; Solla, L; Berard, P. References. *The ACS Style Guide of the American Chemical Society*; Coghill, A; Garson, L, Eds. Washington DC; Oxford University Press; New York, 2006.



Checklist

We are providing this Checklist as a quick reference guide in preparing your article:

- ☐ Use a document in .doc or .docx format, or an article prepared in Apple Pages
- ☐ Insert Footnotes if required rather than Endnotes
- ☐ Write in a relaxed and conversational style. It helps to think that you are writing a letter to a friend explaining your article material.
- ☐ Use a first-person voice
- ☐ Identify acronyms and abbreviations when first used in the article
- ☐ Use *Gender Neutral* language
- ☐ Use UIPAC chemical name nomenclature
- ☐ Refer to ethanol specifically rather than the generic “alcohol”
- ☐ Use metric units whenever possible. Body descriptions may be in Imperial measurement
- ☐ Remember to differentiate BrAC from BAC as required

- ☐ Abstract of about 100 words that explains the contents and importance of the article
- ☐ Introduction that provides a reason for the reader to read the article – why is the information important?
- ☐ Main headings
- ☐ Body text discussion
- ☐ Ask questions of the reader. Try to engage them actively
- ☐ Identify any pull quotes you want highlighted
- ☐ Results of findings, if any
- ☐ Conclusions – refer to the importance of the article
- ☐ Acknowledgements, if necessary

- ☐ References in ACS Format:

Periodicals and Journal Articles

Author 1; Author 2; *et al as required*. Title of Article. *Journal Abbreviation* Year; Volume, Inclusive Pagination.

Books

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Chapter Title. *Book Title*, Edition Number; Series Information (if any); Publisher: Place of Publication, Year; Volume Number, Inclusive Pagination.

- ☐ Prepare rough drawings of any chemical formulas, structures & charts that we will use to create final professional image files.
- ☐ Request any photographs or artwork that you feel would enhance your article
- ☐ Make sure you have copyright clearance for any third-party materials submitted