

## **AuthorAID Tips of the Week**

**#1–#25**

**by Bernard Appiah**

**(posted 1 December 2010–17 May 2011)**

### **Tip of the Week #1**

If you want to know whether others have published a similar article you are planning to write, consider using some keywords of your proposed title to search for those articles. Doing so may help you identify gaps in the literature on your topic.

### **Tip of the Week #2**

Read your paper aloud in a quiet place. Your mouth and ears may help you "catch" errors your eyes alone could not detect.

### **Tip of the Week #3**

Before submitting your paper to a journal, have someone else read it. But first make sure you have seen a printed copy and edited it. Never trust your eyes on a computer screen.

### **Tip of the Week #4**

Rejection is just part of the writer's world. Almost every experienced researcher has had papers or proposals rejected. Don't let fear of rejection keep you from writing.

### **Tip of the Week #5**

When you write a research paper, cool off before you review it. Leaving the paper for some time may help you identify potential mistakes you did not see earlier.

### **Tip of the Week #6**

If you are "new" to writing research papers in peer-reviewed journals, consider not being a single author. Stay away from being an "island." Consider writing papers with your mentors or peers.

### **Tip of the Week #7**

Before writing a research paper for publication in a journal, know the specific journal you intend to publish in. Doing so may help you follow the journals' instructions to authors. In addition, you may be able to identify the type of article likely to be of interest to the journal.

### **Tip of the Week #8**

Use simple words that your audience can understand. Do not use "big" words like others who think that doing so shows one's mastery of the English language.

### **Tip of the Week #9**

Cultivate the habit of identifying active researchers in your field and preparing a list of such researchers. If you can initiate interactions with them, that will be great. You may learn a lot from them. In addition, these researchers may be potential reviewers of your papers.

**Tip of the Week #10**

Writing a research paper requires much revision. "[A]ny serious piece that does not go through at least three versions is hardly worth reading," said Adam A.J. Deville, an assistant professor of theology and author of nearly 70 articles.

**Tip of the Week #11**

When you quote a source in your article, you should triple-check the quote. Doing so may help you avoid putting "false" words into the mouths of those quoted. You should especially be careful with quotes from sources, such as non-electronic papers, that require typing.

**Tip of the Week #12**

Sometimes a journal article quotes another article. If you want to use the quotation in your own article, you should look at the original source, to make sure the quote is accurate.

**Tip of the Week #13**

Write concisely. For instance, in the phrase "whether or not", the "or not" does not add meaning. Therefore, just write "whether".

**Tip of the Week #14**

It's not the total number of references cited that shows that you have researched your topic well. Rather, it is citation of the references that are most relevant to your study.

**Tip of the Week #15**

Writing begins with "pre-writing". While "pre-writing", consider outlining the points you want to make. The outline may serve as a road map for the writing journey.

**Tip of the Week #16**

Writing is a long journey that must be started, maintained, and completed. If you encounter a problem at any stage in the writing process, pause, identify the problem, "recharge your batteries", and move on until you complete the journey.

**Tip of the Week #17**

Journals' author guidelines sometimes tell authors to consult specific style guide or manuals—books that provide advice on writing in a particular field. Consult such guides, especially when the author guidelines do not answer all your questions.

**Tip of the Week #18**

Do not "color" your results with adjectives such as "striking", "interesting", "excellent", and so on. The truth is that if your results are "striking", your readers will know.

**Tip of the Week #19**

Match your methods, results, and conclusions with the objectives of your paper. If you find a "disconnect", look again and ensure there is match.

**Tip of the Week #20**

Tables and figures help communicate some results well. But know that some tables and figures are more suitable for PowerPoint presentations than for journals.

**Tip of the Week #21**

Writing a dissertation or thesis differs from writing for a journal. A dissertation or thesis is more detailed. Not everything from it should appear in a journal.

**Tip of the Week #22**

Having many published research papers is good. But don't slice one small research project into many tiny papers. In other words, don't commit "salami science".

**Tip of the Week #23**

Using articles in your target journal as models for your writing is a good strategy. But ensure that you use recently published articles. Some journals change over time.

**Tip of the Week #24**

Numbers can help strengthen your writing. But before you use percentages or proportions, make sure readers know the base number. If an author claims "33.3% of the rats died, 33.3% ran away, and 33.3% became healthy," look for the total number of rats. Maybe there were only three!

**Tip of the Week #25**

If readers are interpreting your draft in more than one way, know that your paper needs to be written more clearly.