SILVIS manuscript checklist

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|  | **Issue** | **Explanation** | **Suggestion how to check** | **Done** |
| Abstract | Missing pieces | An abstract needs 1-2 sentences for each: Intro, Goals, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. | Please highlight these five different parts in the abstract in different text colors. |  |
| Vague results | Results statements without numbers. | Provide key numbers to substantiate your main results and conclusion. |  |
|  | **Issue** | **Explanation** | **Suggestion how to check** | **Done** |
| Writing errors that best checked with MS Word’s find and replace functions | Inconsistent number of spaces at sentence starts | A new sentence can start with either one (modern) or two spaces (Classic). Make it consistent | A global search for ‘. ‘ |  |
| Sentences starting with a paper reference | Avoid making authors of papers the subject of sentences. Focus on ideas and findings, one WHAT, not WHO | A global search for ‘(‘ to identify any references that are at the beginning of sentences. |  |
| Sentences starting with a figure or table reference | “Fig. 1 shows…” repeats the figure caption. Put figure references at the end of sentence and describe the main point of the figure/table | A global search for ‘Fig‘ and ‘Tab’ to identify any figure and table references at the beginning of sentences. |  |
| Pronouns | When pronouns have unclear antecedents, confusion arises | A global search for ‘this’, ‘these’, ‘it’, ‘they’ to either avoid them (best!), or ensure that they are unambiguous. |  |
| We and our | In scientific writing, ‘we’ and ‘our’ refers only to the authors, not society or science at large | A global search for ‘we’ and ‘our’ to check that they are only used to refer to the authors. |  |
| Data | Data are always plural | A global search for ‘data’, and ensure that they are referred to as plural. |  |
|  | **Issue** | **Explanation** | **Suggestion how to check** | **Done** |
| Writing errors in sentences and paragraphs. Best checked in a printed copy. | Terminology slippage | The use of multiple words to refer to the same concept. | Make a glossary of key terms, use (only!) those consistently.  Please include that glossary when sharing the manuscript |  |
| Jargon | Jargon are terms that are only known to insiders. Contrary to popular belief, writing does not become more scientific by being incomprehensible. | Based on the glossary, search for each jargon term, and either replace it with something that is easier to understand, or – at least –make sure it is defined. |  |
| Abbreviations | Avoid all but the most common abbreviations. ‘GIS’ is fine; not much else. | Read a print copy and make a list of abbreviations. Then get rid of them. |  |
| Passive voice | All work by the authors should be referred to in active voice | Read a print copy to check. If you can add 'by zombies' to your sentence, you are writing in passive voice. |  |
| Tense | All of your work has to be referred to in past tense. Results of others in present tense. | Read a print copy of the Methods and Results section, and make sure that all verbs are in past tense. |  |
| Topic sentences | Topic sentences state what a paragraph is about. The 1st or 2nd sentence in a paragraph should be the topic sentence. | Highlight the topic sentence in each paragraph; please leave it highlighted in the manuscript. |  |
| Overloaded paragraph | Two to three main points in one paragraph | Highlighting of topic sentence will show if everything in a paragraph belongs into it. |  |
|  | **Issue** | **Explanation** | **Suggestion how to check** | **Done** |
| Author guidelines | Author guidelines | All too often ignored. | As soon as you picked the journal, download the author guidelines, and follow them religiously. |  |
| Check the guidelines for length, number of references etc. | Your manuscript cannot violate author instruction. It is fine if drafts are too long, but knowing that is helpful. | Add a comment boxes to the manuscript to state guidelines limits, and state how close the manuscript matches those limits. |  |
| Reference formatting | All references need to follow the author guidelines. Reference software is great, but not error free. | Print out the references, and check them one-by-one. |  |
|  | **Issue** | **Explanation** | **Suggestion how to check** | **Done** |
| Structural problems of the full manuscript. Best checked in a printed copy, with a list of objectives on the side. | Hidden North Star | Taking too long to divulge what the paper is about | Reread your first paragraph of the Intro to see where it leads. |  |
| No goal | The goal of the paper needs to be explicitly stated in the last paragraph of the introduction | Reread the last paragraph of the Intro to ensure that there is a clear goal statement |  |
| No plan | After the goal, come your 2-5 objectives, questions, or hypotheses. These are the steps to reach the goal. | Reread the last paragraph of the Intro to ensure that there is a clear list of objectives, questions, or hypotheses. |  |
| Lack of balance | In a typical manuscript, Intro, Methods, Results and Discussion should each be around 1,000 words. | Add a comment box to each section and state the number of words in that section. |  |
| No follow-through | Follow you plan, i.e., structure the Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion in the same order as your 2-5 objectives. | Check the structure of each sections and ensure that they have the same order as the objectives. Add comment boxes to paragraphs that state which objective it addresses. |  |
| No closure | There cannot be any loose ends. | Check that the results and discussion answer every objective directly. Match them, and state which objective is addressed where in comment boxes. |  |
| Future research | No need to tell others what to do, or you plan to do next. | Check the end of the Discussion and remove future research statements. |  |