When preparing manuscripts

We love working with you on your manuscripts and are committed to helping you make your manuscript as strong as possible!

What follows are thoughts on how to make the writing and revising process easy and straightforward. Please trust us on this, each of us is – literally – reviewing and editing hundreds of manuscripts each year.

You can share your manuscript at any point when you would like feedback! Your manuscript does not have to be complete, and we certainly do not expect it to be perfect!

We ask that you use the SILVIS manuscript template as your starting point even when you work only on one section of your manuscript. That way the structure of each of sections will be clean and consistent from the start and you do not have to revise it later.

We ask that you follow the list of our preferences (see below) from the onset. This will save you time because you do not have to reformat your manuscript and maps later.

Whenever you share a manuscript, please tell us what kind of feedback you are looking for. For example, do you want us to verify if the general direction is right? Or are you looking for detailed edits that fix grammar and style throughout the manuscript?

Typically, we will print out early version of your manuscript and make general comments about direction, structure, and content. Later versions, we will edit electronically using track-changes in MS Word.

When you get your manuscript with track-level changes back, there will be A LOT of them. Your first reaction will be: “It’s all red!”. Please do not be upset by this! The same happens to everyone, it is part of the process of polishing manuscripts. Please look at the PowerPoint presentation “It’s all red” to prepare you for that moment 😊

Before we make detailed edits with track changes, we will ask that you go through the manuscript checklist. Going through the checklist will allow you to fix the most common mistakes in scientific writing. As a result, you will receive much less ‘red’ (see prior comment), and more substantive feedback from us, because we are not focused on fixing those common errors.

Our preferences for manuscripts and maps

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Preference** | **Explanation** | **Done** |
| Manuscripts | Please include an abstract in EVERY draft manuscript | The abstract is THE most important part of your manuscript and read by many more people than the paper itself. Plus, writing the abstract early will hone your paper’s message. |  |
| Please use a font with serifs, e.g., Book Antiqua or Times New Roman | It is faster for us to read manuscripts if fonts have serifs. Non-serif fonts (e.g., Calibri or Arial) take longer to read for us, so please do not use them. |  |
| Please left-align (only) your text | Text that is align on both the left and the right side, also called ‘justified’ is harder for us to read because whitespace between words is inconsistent |  |
| Please put tables and figures at the end of your manuscript. Don’t embed them in the text | We print out the manuscript when reading it and can easier refer to figures while reading if they are on separate pages, and not embedded in the text. A separate page for each. |  |
| Please email us your manuscript as a MS Word document | Editing online documents (Google Doc, Word online) slows us down, and is difficult while traveling. If your file is too large to email, then it is also too large for us to edit efficiently. Please reduce figure resolution so that it can be emailed. |  |
| Please do not zip multiple files | It slows us down to deal with unzipping because different people use different software to zip |  |
| Please start your file name with your full first or last name | That way we do not get confused with all lots of ‘chapter1.doc’ files |  |
| Please remove all track changes and as many comments as possible between iterations | We prefer to work on a clean manuscript in each round. When you receive our feedback as track-changes and in comment boxes, please decide for each if you agree, and then accept or address our comment. Only leave comments that you disagree with or were confusing to you. |  |
| Maps | Please use Robinson projection for global, Albers for continental, and UTM for regional maps | Many other projection systems make northern areas appear larger than they are, which is a justice issue because it makes dominantly white countries seem more important. Plus, Robinson’s projection was developed at UW-Madison! |  |
| Please use a discrete not a continuous gradient | Discrete gradients define the numerical range of each polygon or pixel. Thereby maps provide more precise information. |  |
| Please use an ‘approved’ color gradient, and certainly not ‘rainbow’ | The paper “The misuse of color in science communication” explains succinctly the problems with the rainbow gradient and recommends several other gradients. The website colorbrewer2.org also has many great recommended gradients. |  |
| Please check that your figures are color-blind friendly | One in twelve men and one in two hundred women is colorblind. Our maps and figures ought to be legible to them. You can past your figures into [www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/](http://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/) to check |  |