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CHECKLIST: MANUSCRIPT CONSISTENCY

This checklist highlights some of the most common instances where two or more conventions are acceptable and a decision needs to be made for which one will be used. This checklist can be printed out and used as a guide when reviewing a manuscript to spot consistency issues.

Note that this checklist covers only **some** of the most common consistency problems encountered in scientific journal writing. It is important to remember that any decision made regarding a format style must be implemented consistently.

Finally, your **target journal's style sheet** should always be consulted first when making decisions regarding any consistency issue. If you have questions about any aspect of writing your manuscript, contact us at **support@as.springernature.com** Best of luck!

STRUCTURE

- ☐ Check the style of the headings for consistency. Some journals request a specific style, so please review the journal guidelines. For example, headings should be capitalized consistently (e.g., either "This Heading Style" or "This heading style"). Subheadings can have a different format from the main headings, but they too should be consistent with each other.
- ☐ Ensure that the font size and style is consistent throughout the manuscript. Headings, tables, figures, and their legends may use different font sizes and styles, but please ensure that each of these elements is self-consistent. For example, use a consistent font size and style for numerals in a table, and use a consistent font size and style for the names or descriptions of variables in the table.

VAGUE OR AMBIGUOUS LANGUAGE

- ☐ In general, demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those) should be used as adjectives. For example, instead of writing, "This shows that X is higher than Y", writing "This result shows that X is higher than Y" improves the clarity of the clause. Please check the manuscript for such instances. See the resource, "Avoiding Vague Pronouns" for more information about vague pronouns.
- ☐ The use of 'respectively' requires a parallel list, e.g., "Samples A, B, and C degraded 100%, 90%, and 80% of the reagent, respectively." Please ensure that all instances of 'respectively' follow this rule. See the resource, "Editing Tip: 'Respectively' and 'Namely'" for more information about using 'respectively' with lists.

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CITATIONS

- ☐ Check for consistency with the formatting of in-text citations. Review the journal guidelines for the requested style. Many formatting and style issues are discussed in the journal's instructions for authors. If the journal does not specify a preference, please consistently apply the style you choose throughout the manuscript.

PUNCTUATION

- ☐ Use of the terminal comma in a series should be consistent. Either its inclusion (A, B, and C) or omission (A, B and C) is acceptable, but please be consistent throughout the manuscript. The journal may have a preference in this matter.
- ☐ Check for consistent punctuation of sentences that end in mathematical equations.
- ☐ Check for consistency with the inclusion of either one or two spaces between sentences throughout the manuscript. Generally, only one space is necessary.
- ☐ Consistently use or omit the period when abbreviating words such as 'versus' (i.e., 'vs.' or 'vs').
- ☐ Please use a consistent length and style for dashes and hyphens. Also, ensure that the spacing (or lack of spacing) around dashes and hyphens is consistent.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- ☐ Abbreviations and acronyms are usually defined the first time they are used within the abstract (if they appear in the abstract) and again in the main text; they are then used exclusively throughout the remainder of the manuscript. Please consider adhering to this convention at all times. Your journal may specify some exceptions, such as redefining acronyms and abbreviations in the conclusions, headings, tables, or figures, so consult their guidelines. In addition, many journals have lists of approved abbreviations that require no definition.
- ☐ If your paper contains abbreviations of chemical elements (e.g., "Pb" for "lead"), ensure that the abbreviation is used consistently. It is acceptable, however, to begin a sentence with the element spelled out (e.g., "Lead was detected in the samples."). For other tips for writing chemistry papers, see the resource, "Writing Organic and Medicinal Chemistry Papers."
- ☐ It is acceptable to spell out abbreviations if they begin a sentence, but this format should also be employed consistently. You can also rearrange the text slightly to place the abbreviation elsewhere in the sentence. (This option is desirable when the fully defined term is very long.)

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NUMBERS, UNITS, AND FIGURES

Check for consistency with the following:

- ☐ The inclusion of a zero before the decimal point in a number, e.g., either '0.5' or '.5'.
- ☐ The inclusion of a space between a number and the temperature degree symbol (e.g., '37°C' or '37 °C').
- ☐ The inclusion of a space between the number and the percent symbol (e.g., '5%' or '5 %').
- ☐ The inclusion of a space between the number and a mathematical symbol or operator. For example, use either "30.5 ± 8.4 years" or "30.5±8.4 years" and "bandwidth = 4.984" or "bandwidth=4.984".
- ☐ The abbreviations used for units of time (e.g., use either 'sec' or 's').
- ☐ With the abbreviations used for units of volume (e.g., use either 'ml' or 'mL').
- ☐ The full spelling or abbreviation of 'Figure', 'Table', and/or 'Equation'.
- ☐ The capitalization (or lack thereof) of 'Figure', 'Table', and/or 'Equation' in the paper.
- ☐ Numbers equal to or greater than 1,000 (that is, follow one specific style: '144,000', '144 000', '144000', or '144 thousand').
- ☐ The full spelling of numbers or use numerals (e.g., 'ten' or '10'). Journals generally have a preference for numeral usage, so review the guidelines for the requested convention.
- ☐ Many English-language journals request the use of a period to indicate decimals instead of a comma (e.g., '1.00' not '1,00'). Please make the appropriate changes throughout the manuscript and in any tables or figures.

FIELD-SPECIFIC ISSUES

Some issues of consistency relate to your specific field of study. Here are two examples, but always consult your target journal's instructions for more information about area-specific conventions to follow.

- ☐ Check gene and protein nomenclature for consistency. In some fields, for example, gene names are italicized and lowercase, but protein names are non-italicized and capitalized. Please make any corrections needed to fit the convention used in your field of study and maintain consistency throughout the manuscript.
- ☐ Place names should be presented consistently. For example, use either "Hubei Province" or "Hubei province," and use either "the Tiber River" or "the Tiber river." In both examples, it is generally preferable to use the former format, where the geographical feature is also capitalized because it is part of the proper name.

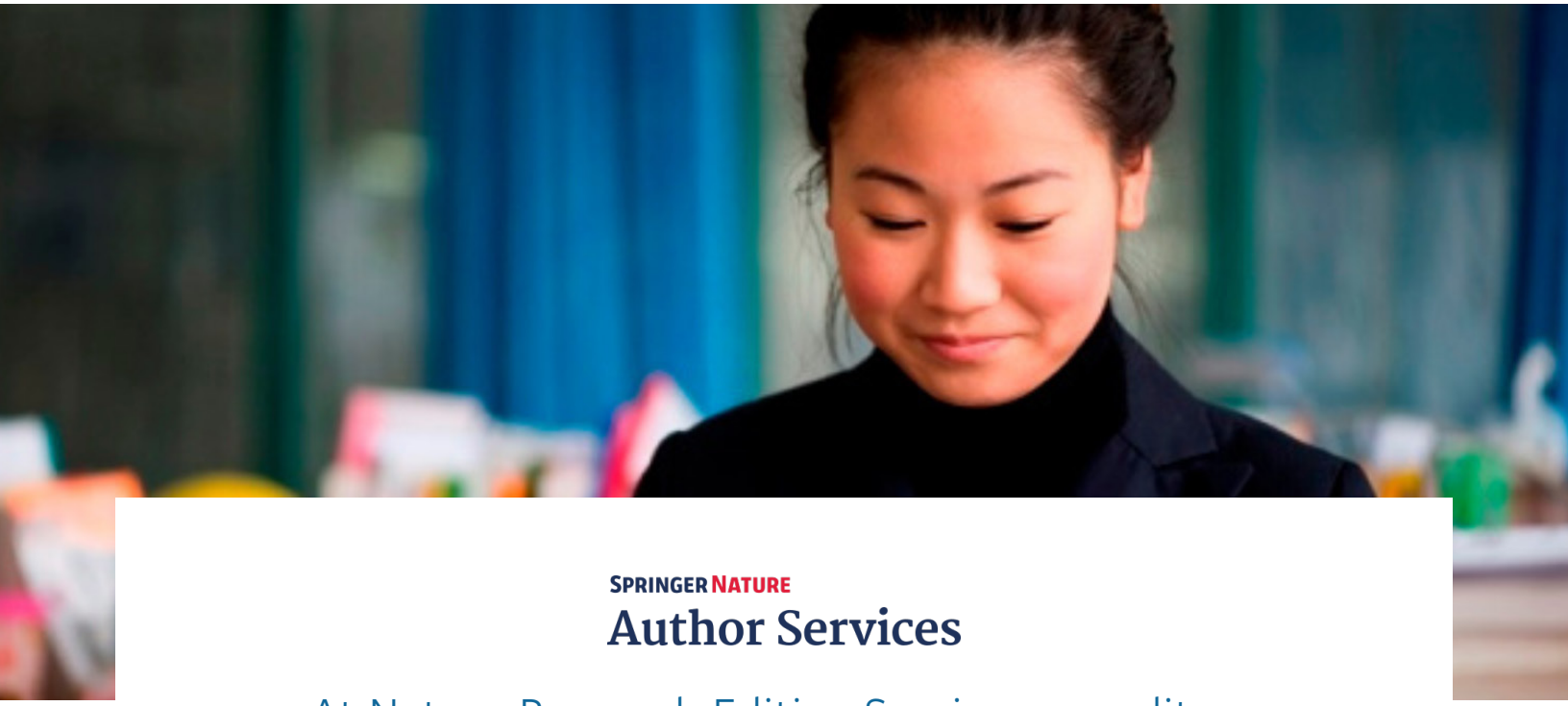
Keeping these items in mind is sure to help your manuscript better fit the conventions of academic writing. We hope that this checklist will make the process of writing your next manuscript a little easier.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Roth is an Academic Editor. He received a BA in Philosophy from Wheaton College, with additional studies in Earth Sciences and Astronomy, and he studied Renaissance Art at Oxford University. He received his Master of Theological Studies from Duke University, where his thesis work focused on religion and film. He is the author of *The Week That Changed the World* and co-author of *Quentin Tarantino and Philosophy*.



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