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Contributors Can Contribute Too

This week, on page 496, we publish a paper of our own that is neither an editorial, news, nor Association affairs. It is called "Instructions for contributors." It describes the kinds of papers we believe readers expect to find in *Science*, the level of language that is appropriate, and the form in which manuscripts should be prepared. We urge prospective contributors to follow these instructions, for if they do, the selection process can be speeded up and the period between receipt and publication of papers can be shortened. Failure to follow the instructions will inevitably result in delays.

No precise boundaries for the subject matter of interest to our readers can be set forth. Basically, we seek to publish papers that will advance the knowledge of the scientific community. The material may be of broad general interest, of interdisciplinary interest, or of particular significance in a limited field. Material that opens new vistas or serves as a step toward further work is especially appropriate. It may be concerned with any of the physical, biological, earth, behavioral, or social sciences. It may consist of a first account of new research results, a review of the state of knowledge in one field, a study in the history or philosophy of science, or a discussion of the problems science raises for other forms of human endeavor, including problems raised by the interaction of science and public affairs and problems in the administration of research and in science education.

The readers of *Science* come from all fields, and an author may expect that 75 to 99 percent of them work in a field different from his own. Hence all articles, meeting reports, book reviews, and letters should be written in language suitable for a general scientific audience. Similar language is also desirable for at least the first few paragraphs of reports, even though technical terms peculiar to a field must be introduced to present the data and arguments.

The organization of papers is important. Most papers should focus on a particular point or problem that is stated succinctly in the first paragraph. Data and supporting arguments can follow logically, provided that their relationship to the problem is made clear. Steps in the work are most understandable if they are presented in terms of the purpose they serve rather than in chronological order. If readers are confused by poor organization or by writing that is incoherent or too technical they will not continue reading. To the extent that readers stop reading or skip papers, both the authors and the editorial staff fail in their effort.

Manuscripts should be prepared in the form described. Everything should be double-spaced. If the instructions for paging, titles, abstracts or subtitles, subheads, tables, figures, equations, and references are followed carefully, the result will be a manuscript that invites rapid handling.

Publication of the new instructions, like the enlargement of our editorial board which was announced in this space last week, is part of an effort to achieve rapid publication without sacrificing quality in selecting papers and presenting them in *Science*. Rapid publication benefits both readers and authors. Authors can make a solid contribution to the effort.—R.V.O.