

THE HIGH FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN FORMAT IN MANUSCRIPTS SUBMITTED TO *PROCEEDINGS OF THE BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON*

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Abstract.—Failures to conform to 25 items of *Proceedings* style are enumerated for 40 manuscripts submitted for publication. Up to 15 errors/manuscript were found, with a mean of 4.85 errors/manuscript. Authors are urged to improve this record.

Having recently reached the 7th decade of my life and having served as Associate Editor for Invertebrates for 14 years, I have decided to give up that position and spend more time on research projects to which I am committed. Hoping to make my successor's task easier, I wish to call attention to the high frequency of failures by authors to conform to the format of the *Proceedings*. Such failures increase unnecessarily the burdens of the editors and in most cases could easily be avoided.

I chose 25 items of format and analyzed 40 randomly selected manuscripts for conformity with these items. The items are listed below, arranged in 10 categories. Following each format item is the number, and in parentheses, the percentage of manuscripts containing that error of format.

- I. Address(es) of author(s)
 1. Address(es) omitted—2 (5%)
 2. Address(es) in wrong place—13 (32.5%)
- II. Abstract
 3. Abstract missing—2 (5%)
 4. "Abstract" a center instead of a side heading—12 (30%)
- III. Center headings (e.g., name of a family, Acknowledgments, Literature Cited)
 5. Side heading used instead of center heading—4 (10%)
 6. Center heading in italics—2 (5%)
 7. Center heading in all capitals—17 (42.5%)
- IV. Side headings
 8. Side heading not indented—16 (40%)
 9. Side heading in wrong format (e.g., in all capitals, all words capitalized, colon used instead of period and dash)—13 (32.5%)
- V. Synonymies
 10. Punctuation incorrect—3 (7.5%)
 11. Names of journals included—2 (5%)
- VI. Citations of references in text
 12. Punctuation incorrect, e.g., "Smith, 1960, p. 10" instead of "Smith 1960:10"—6 (15%)
- VII. References in text to figures
 13. "Figure" instead of "Fig."—5 (12.5%)
 14. "fig." instead of "Fig."—5 (12.5%)
- VIII. Citations of dates in *Materials* sections
 15. Failure to use day-month-year and 3-letter abbreviation without period for month, e.g., 15 Jun 1960—7 (17.5%)
- IX. Literature Cited
 16. Literature Cited single spaced—3 (7.5%)
 17. Names of journals abbreviated—11 (27.5%)
 18. Names of journals in italics—3 (7.5%)
 19. Words in titles of articles capitalized—3 (7.5%)

20. Punctuation of authors' names incorrect—14 (35%)
21. Pagination lacking or incomplete—2 (5%)
22. Indentation incorrect—4 (10%)
- X. Legends for illustrations
23. "Figure" used instead of "Fig."—10 (25%)
24. Indentation incorrect—19 (47.5%)
25. Punctuation incorrect—17 (42.5%)

A total of 194 of the 25 kinds of format errors was found in the 40 manuscripts. The number of errors/manuscript ranged from 0–15, with a mean of 4.85 and a mode of 4. Thus the average manuscript contained errors in about $\frac{1}{8}$ of the format items. Only $\frac{1}{10}$ of the manuscripts were free of format errors.

Of the 25 format items, directions are given for 8 in "Information for Contributors" on the inside back cover of each issue of the *Proceedings*. The other 17 should be apparent to any author who examines a recent issue. *Proceedings* editors are uncompensated volunteers. Please be kind to them by doing your best to follow *Proceedings* format; it does not require great effort or sacrifice to do so, and it will speed up the editorial processing of your manuscript.

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