

## Writing Scientific Reports

Communication in Science is as important as it is in English or any other field. This communication usually takes place in writing: books, magazines, or reports. But like other writing, scientific writing is of value only if it conveys the author's intent. Three things are important to remember when writing about a scientific process.

1. Ideas should be expressed in the briefest wording possible but always in complete sentences. Experimental data need not be submitted in sentence form if they are more logically presented in tables or graphs. (Note: data is plural— the singular form is datum)
2. All writing should be in the passive voice. The subject of the sentence in the passive voice is the receiver of the action rather than the doer (see handout on passive and active verbs). Passive voice emphasizes the process and de-emphasizes the doer; it also helps establish an objective point of view.
3. Only conclusions supported by the data are appropriate for a scientific report. The thoughts or feelings of the author, as well as any statements unrelated to the experiment, are not included.

The following statements should be rewritten or made into tables to make them acceptable in a report.

- Objective. To determine by titration the equivalent weight of a weak acid.
- I noticed that my test tubes were dirty, so that could be one possible reason why my results weren't what they should have been.
- The fish started swimming around a lot more; I think they were playing or something.
- Trial I was 58% iron; trial II was 53%; trial III was 55%; trial VI was 58%; the average was 56%.