**Macdonald Group Writing Tips**

**Forbidden (or overused) Words**

Centrifuging centrifugation

Cheap inexpensive, readily available

Clear as in “it is clear” or “clearly seen” unnecessary and insulting to those for whom it is not clear

Compliment complement (learn the difference!)

Core-Shells core-shell nanoparticles

Crashed precipitated

Done performed, completed

Easy facile, simple, straightforward

Lab laboratory

Looked into examined, sought, desired, determined, ascertained

Make/made synthesize(d), prepare(d), perform(ed), render, cause

Novel (if you absolutely must) new, facile, ground-breaking, (if it isn’t these

things, why would we be working on it?)

Overnight 16 h/24 h

Problem challenge, disadvantage

See/Seen “as can be seen”, see “clear” above

Thing

This/These always followed by a noun “These reactions were…” not “These were”

Too also, as well, additionally

Use application, employment

Used employed, applied

Valance valence (one is curtains!)

Could/would/may will

It’s, won’t, can’t, aren’t, etc. - It is, will not, cannot, are not

**Possessives of Inanimate objects – don’t use them (if an inanimate object has an apostrophe, something needs to be fixed)**

The molecule’s pKa- The pKa of the molecule.

Converted to its ester – converted to the ester

Wilkinson’s catalyst – this is OK since Wilkinson was a person

**Personal Pronouns- don’t use them**

I/we/my/our/us/myself- maximum two per document and only to be used when comparing your work to that of others already in the literature.

**Ten dollar words**

therefore, thus, hence, consequently

yet, but, however

heretofore, thus far, so far, to date

furthermore, moreover

cause, render, furnish, lead to, facilitate,

at the same time, concomitantly, contemporaneously

ascertain, determine

showed, demonstrated, ascertained, proved,

improve, ameliorate,

**Periods and commas in Latin abbreviations**

e.g. exempli grati "for example"

*i.e*., *id est* "that is," "in other words,"

et al. *et alii* “and others”

*vs* or *vs. versus*  “against, turned”

*vide supra* “see above”

*vide infra* “see below”

*etc.* (rarely *&c.* – note that the ampersand is a drawing of *“et”-* “and*”)* *et cetera* “and

others” “and so forth”

**Position of Figure Captions, Schemes Titles and Tables:**

Table Titles on “Top”

Figure Captions “Fall Under” – also schemes.

**Capitals:**

1) People, yes:Fisher esterification

2) Elements, no: ruthenium

3) Defining method acronyms, yes: “…X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) was employed. The XRD peaks…” Capitalize the words that yield the acronym when you define it the first time it shows up in the document.

**Semicolons (;):**

1. Link two closely related *complete* sentences. The second sentence does not begin with a capital. Semicolons can always be replaced with a period followed by a capital letter.

“However, the authors’ hypothesis may not be entirely correct; an equally valid hypothesis is that the reaction is controlled instead by pH.”

“CdS nanorods with seeds of CdSe and ZnSe should behave similarly; CdSe has a valence band at an energy level only 0.07 eV higher than that of ZnSe”

1. Clarify confusing lists within lists. Semicolons are used for the broader list.

“So far, hybrid nanoparticles of CdS have been prepared through heterogeneous nucleation after hydrolysis, decomposition, or chemical reduction; cation exchange; and photo-reduction by the semiconductor.”

**Colons:**

1)Begin lists at the end of sentences

“A photocatalyst for water splitting contains three active parts: a photoabsorber, a water oxidation catalyst, and a water reduction catalyst.”

2) There are other uses of the colon, but the one above is the most common in science writing

**Numbers:**

1. Particle sizes should be written as 5.4 ± 0.3 nm, n = 208

Note the spaces, position of nm, etc. Watch your significant figures; 5.413 nm is unlikely to be reasonable!

1. Whole numbers below twenty should be written out as words while larger numbers as numerals e.g. “…63 samples were processed by three different methods…”

**Abbreviations in experimental sections (note spaces and lack of periods)**

1 h

2 min

3 s

295 K

350°C (degree symbol is option+shift+8 on Mac. Alt+0176 on PC)

3.25 mol (SIG FIGS!)

3.653 g (SIG FIGS!)

10 mL

**Common editing marks by Dr. Macdonald**

PP make a new paragraph here

Splice comma splice (learn what this is!!!)

Run on run on sentence, break into smaller sentences

Incomp incomplete sentence

AWK awkward sentence, reword

Ten/Tense incorrect tense agreement (noun with verb)

or incorrect use of present/past/future

Flip flip logical order of sentence

i.e., second idea should be placed first in the sentence or paragraph

Repeat Too many uses of the same word (or they may simply be underlined)

Semicolonitis overuse of the semicolon (;) – max one per page

Replace with period and capital or conjunction and comma

Colonitis overuse of the colon (:)- reword sentences for better flow.

FANBOYS improper use of comma when using a conjunction (if you see this, look up the rule for conjunctions: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So… etc.)

**Writing for RSC Journals : British Spellings** (hint: change language in Word to UK English and look for red squiggly lines)

Sulfur (Alice says they changed it. They bowed to pressure from the US)

Grey

Colour, favour, behaviour,

Centre, fibre, litre, metre (BUT, perimeter, parameter… )

Lots of izes- ises