

Alley, M.: **The Craft of Scientific Writing**. 3rd Ed. - Springer, New York - Berlin - Heidelberg - Barcelona - Budapest - Hong Kong - London - Milan - Paris - Santa Clara - Singapore - Tokyo 1996. ISBN 0-387-94766-3. 282 pp., DM 39.80.

This is a textbook in courses on scientific writing prepared by a lecturer in the College of Engineering of the University of Wisconsin. The affiliation of the author explains why the text examples are mainly chosen from technical topics and why the atmosphere of the book is typically American (e.g., often mentioning a baseball announcer). The author teaches the procedure of writing a paper from decision where to begin to finishing the manuscript.

Seventeen chapters of the book deal with structure of the planned document, choice of details, attention to quality of language (six chapters on being: precise, clear, forthright, familiar, concise, and fluid), preparing of illustrations (two chapters: on right choice and on best design), various types of written (and also spoken) materials (correspondence, proposals, instructions, presentations), format (typography, layout), and actual procedure of writing (only one chapter: "getting in the mood; writing the first draft; revising, revising, revising; finishing"). This list shows that scientific papers written in the IMRAD scheme, that are typical for natural sciences, are not of primary interest in this manual.

Advantage of the book is that the main text is printed in large, well legible letters and examples in letters of a smaller size. There are many examples in the text. Two appendices summarise the common pitfalls of grammar, punctuation, and usage. A useful glossary and a good subject index are supplemented. The manual was prepared for students who start with writing documents, and therefore some explanations are very basic, and the textbook is in many places too trivial, too talkative, and too American. Nevertheless, some fairly broad examples enlarge the reader's knowledge in various fields, such as blood tests, downing of Pan Am Flight 103, or high altitude illness. The readers even get an information on the Czech produced explosive Semtex. I agree with the majority of recommendations the author gives. Nevertheless, I disagree with his fight against the use of abbreviations and numerals (pp. 139-140, 147).

Every edition of this book was published by another publishing house (1st Ed. Prentice-Hall in 1987, 2nd Ed. Michael Alley himself in 1995, 3rd Ed. American branch of the Springer-Verlag). I do not recommend the manual as a first choice textbook to European students in natural sciences, but even they will certainly find here many useful examples and supplementary recommendations to improve style and avoid errors. And they will read with pleasure well-chosen mottoes, like this one: "I don't mind your thinking slowly, but I do mind your publishing faster than you think. - Wolfgang Pauli" (p. 178).

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