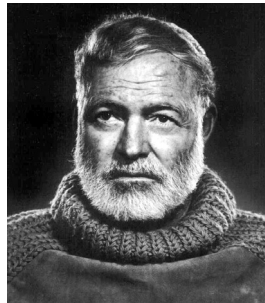


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Plenary session | 17:45-18:30

Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



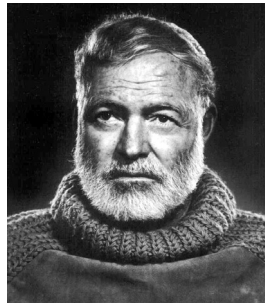
Jean-luc Doumont
www.principiae.be

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Wed 5 Dec 2007

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Prose is architecture,
not interior decoration

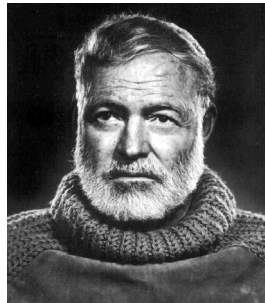
— *Ernest Hemingway*

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Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



Complicated writing

Purpose and audience

Chronological writing

The theorem approach

Depersonalized writing

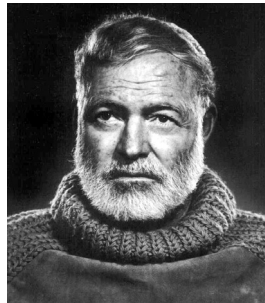
Clear, accurate, concise

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Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



Complicated writing
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Clear, accurate, concise

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Effective communication is getting the message across

Get your audience to

- pay attention to
- understand
- be able to act upon

a message

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Effective communication is
getting the message across

Information

Interpretation

Message

What?

So what?

Effective communication is **optimization under constraints**

Get your audience to

- pay attention to
- understand
- be able to act upon

a **maximum of message(s), given constraints**

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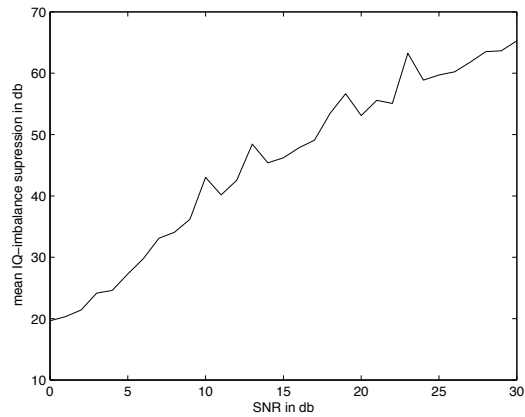


Fig. 6. IQ-imbalance suppression versus SNR

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Academic writing is a poor preparation for communication in the real world

	Academia	Real world
Audience	Single, well-defined More knowledgeable Captive	Multiple, unpredictable Less knowledgeable Selective
Purpose	Demonstrate knowledge	Inform, convince, ...

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To communicate effectively,
make sure you **have messages**

Take distance from your work

to identify motivation and outcome

Recognize opportunity

such as captions of figures

Be selective about contents

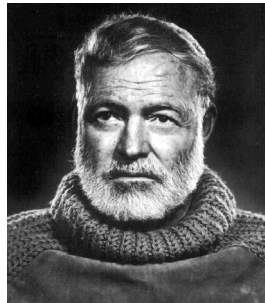
Express complexity in a simple way

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Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



Complicated writing
Purpose and audience

Chronological writing
The theorem approach

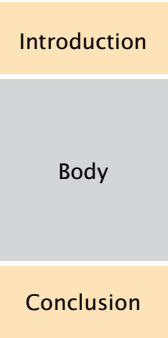
Depersonalized writing
Clear, accurate, concise

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Most documents are chronological...



Introduction

Body

Conclusion

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Most documents are chronological,
except for the appendices



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What interests readers is...

Components of
primary interest

Readers 

Introduction

Body

Readers 

Conclusion

Appendices

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What interests readers is not what interests authors


Components of
primary interest

Readers 

Introduction

Authors 

Body

Readers 

Conclusion

Authors 

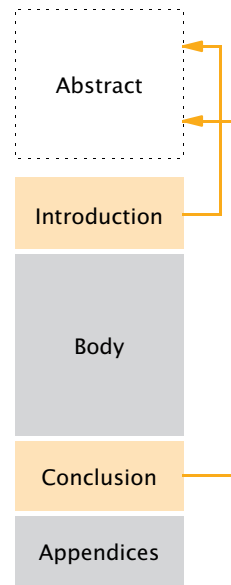
Appendices

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Put what interests readers
upfront in an abstract

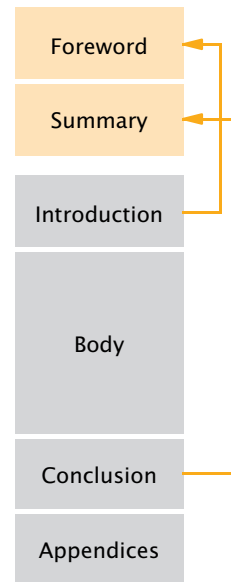


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Put what interests readers
upfront in an abstract



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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*



Summary
The *after*



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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword

The *before*

Need

(= problem)

A way to motivate the audience
(what you have ≠ what you want)

Summary

The *after*

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*

Need
Task

What I decided or was asked to do
in order to address the need

Summary
The *after*

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*

Need
Task

Summary
The *after*

Findings

What I found as a result
of carrying out the task

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*

Need
Task

Summary
The *after*

Findings
Conclusion
(= interpretation/
recommendation)

What the findings mean to you
(possibly what you should do)

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*

Need
Task
Object

What the document does/contains
(and what you should do with it)

Summary
The *after*

Findings
Conclusion

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword

The *before*

Context

Need

Task

Object

What you need to know
to understand the need

Summary

The *after*

Findings

Conclusion

Perspectives

What I/you/they will do in the future

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An effective summary includes
both a *foreword* and a *summary*

Foreword
The *before*

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
The *after*

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

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An effective abstract comprises four layers

Foreword
The before

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
The after

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

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An effective abstract comprises four layers

Foreword
The before

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
The after

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

document

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An effective abstract comprises four layers

Foreword
The before

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
The after

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

me
document
me

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An effective abstract comprises four layers

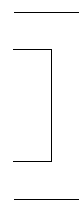
Foreword
The before

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
The after

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

you
me
document
me
you



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An effective abstract comprises four layers

Foreword
The *before*

Context
Need
Task
Object

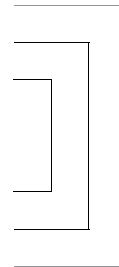
Summary
The *after*

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

past
you
me

document

me
you
future



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The foreword (*before*) motivates the readers

Why

Motivation

Context

Need

Task

Object

Summary

The *after*

Findings

Conclusion

Perspectives

Why now

Why you

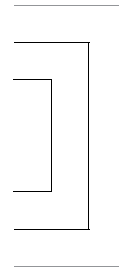
Why me

Why document

me

you

future



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The summary (*after*) gets messages across

Why

Motivation

Context

Need

Task

Object

What

Message(s)

Findings

Conclusion

Perspectives

Why now

Why you

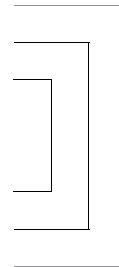
Why me

Why document

What

So what

What now



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An effective abstract helps readers make informed decisions

Foreword
Motivation

Context
Need
Task
Object

Summary
Message(s)

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives

“Do I care?”

“Do I need more?”

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This paper describes PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool we have developed for the Intel IA-32 architecture. A number of characteristics of this architecture complicate the task of link-time optimization. These include a large number of op-codes and addressing modes, which increases the complexity of program analysis; variable-length instructions, which complicates disassembly of machine code; a paucity of available registers, which limits the extent of some optimizations; and a reliance on using memory locations for holding values and for parameter passing, which complicates program analysis and optimization. We describe how PLTO addresses these problems and the resulting performance improvements it is able to achieve.

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On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family. We have developed PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool for IA-32. This paper describes how PLTO addresses the complexities of this processor architecture and which analyses and optimizations contribute to the achieved performance improvements. Currently, PLTO achieves a moderate speedup of about 6% on average. We expect bigger speedups once we have solved a remaining problem involving significantly increased instruction cache misses.

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Context

On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family. We have developed PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool for IA-32. This paper describes how PLTO addresses the complexities of this processor architecture and which analyses and optimizations contribute to the achieved performance improvements. Currently, PLTO achieves a moderate speedup of about 6% on average. We expect bigger speedups once we have solved a remaining problem involving significantly increased instruction cache misses.

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Need

On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. **However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family.**

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Task

On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family.

We have developed PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool for IA-32. This paper describes how PLTO addresses the complexities of this processor architecture and which analyses and optimizations contribute to the achieved performance improvements. Currently, PLTO achieves a moderate speedup of about 6% on average. We expect bigger speedups once we have solved a remaining problem involving significantly increased instruction cache misses.

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Object

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Findings

On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family. We have developed PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool for IA-32. This paper describes how PLTO addresses the complexities of this processor architecture and which analyses and optimizations contribute to the achieved performance improvements. **Currently, PLTO achieves a moderate speedup of about 6% on average.** We expect bigger speedups once we have solved a remaining problem involving significantly increased instruction cache misses.

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Conclusion Perspect.

On simple RISC architectures, post-link-time optimization of executable programs delivers significant performance improvements. However, the applicability of this technique has not yet been evaluated for more complex CISC architectures such as the widely used Intel IA-32 processor family. We have developed PLTO, a link-time instrumentation and optimization tool for IA-32. This paper describes how PLTO addresses the complexities of this processor architecture and which analyses and optimizations contribute to the achieved performance improvements. Currently, PLTO achieves a moderate speedup of about 6% on average. **We expect bigger speedups once we have solved a remaining problem involving significantly increased instruction cache misses.**

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Abstract *versus* full document: much more than copy/paste

Read by ...

everyone

specialists

Context
Need
Task
Object

Findings
Conclusion
Perspectives



Introduction

Body

Conclusion

Appendices

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First tell the **beginning** and the **end**,
then the rest—whether short or long



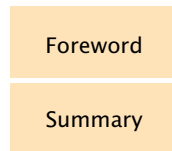
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Apply the theorem-proof approach recursively

Whole document



Details

Single chapter



Global paragraph

Details

Details

A preview of what follows

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Single-use, disposable medical devices are pre-packaged and sterilized by the manufacturer. The packaging is chosen to provide protection for the product, to facilitate sterilization, to maintain sterility, and to be easy to use. Reusable devices, by contrast, must be durable both in service and in their ability to withstand repeated sterilization. ...

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Single-use, disposable medical devices are pre-packaged and sterilized by the manufacturer. The packaging is chosen to provide protection for the product, to facilitate sterilization, to maintain sterility, and to be easy to use. **Reusable devices, by contrast,** must be durable both in service and in their ability to withstand repeated sterilization. ...

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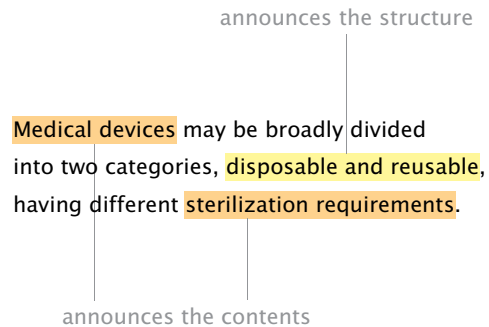
Medical devices may be broadly divided into two categories, disposable and reusable, having different sterilization requirements.

Single-use, disposable medical devices are pre-packaged and sterilized by the manufacturer.

The packaging is chosen to provide protection for the product, to facilitate sterilization, to maintain sterility, and to be easy to use.

Reusable devices, by contrast, must be durable both in service and in their ability to withstand repeated sterilization. ...

Prepare the readers for content and structure,
with a **topic sentence**



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Figure 2 shows the evolution of the germanium content in the SiGe layer. Obviously there is a nearly linear decrease of the germanium content with increasing fluence, apart from a near constant region around 2×10^{17} at/cm². Knowing the number of atoms that has been sputtered and the O₂ fluence, it is then quite easy to calculate the germanium sputter yield.

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To be kept

Ineffectively redundant

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the germanium content in the SiGe layer. Obviously

there is a nearly linear decrease of the germanium content with increasing fluence, apart from a near constant region around 2×10^{17} at/cm². Knowing the number of atoms that has been sputtered and the O₂ fluence, it is then quite easy to calculate the germanium sputter yield.

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The germanium content decreases linearly with increasing fluence apart from a near constant region around 2×10^{17} at/cm² (Figure 2).

Knowing the number of atoms that has been sputtered and the O₂ fluence, it is then quite easy to calculate the germanium sputter yield.

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Again, state your message upfront

Whole document



Details

Single paragraph



Development

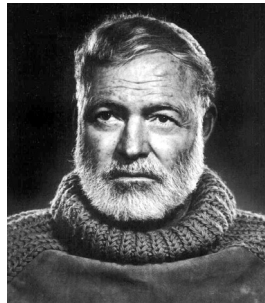
Do I care?
Do I need more?

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Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



Complicated writing
Purpose and audience

Chronological writing
The theorem approach

Depersonalized writing
Clear, accurate, concise

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In scientific writing, no one
ever seems to do anything

John evaluated the algorithm.

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In scientific writing, no one
ever seems to do anything

~~John~~ evaluated the algorithm

The algorithm was evaluated.

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In scientific writing, no one
ever seems to do anything

~~John~~ evaluated the algorithm

~~The algorithm~~ was evaluated

An evaluation of the algorithm was conducted.

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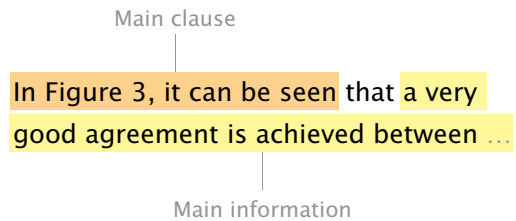
In Figure 3, it can be seen that a very good agreement is achieved between ...

“it can be seen that” site:ugent.be **600 hits**

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When writing a complex sentence, place
the **main information** in the **main clause**

First, suppress the main clause

~~In Figure 3, it can be seen that~~ a very
good agreement is achieved between ...

When writing a complex sentence, place
the **main information** in the **main clause**

First, suppress the main clause

~~In Figure 3, it can be seen that~~ a very
good agreement is achieved between ...

Then, put back what you may have lost

A very good agreement is achieved between
experimental and simulation results (**Figure 3**).

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A very good agreement is achieved between
experimental and simulation results (Figure 3).

Express the action with a **verb**,
not with a noun

Experimental and simulation results
agree very well (Figure 3).



**A very good agreement is achieved between
experimental and simulation results (Figure 3).**

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Experimental and simulation results
agree very well (Figure 3).

Suppress unnecessary words

Experimental and simulation results
agree **very well** (Figure 3).

|
?

Experimental and simulation results
agree (Figure 3).

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Before

In Figure 3, it can be seen that a very good agreement is achieved between experimental and simulation results.

After

Experimental and simulation results agree (Figure 3).

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This region is believed to be the source
of many short-period comets.

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Who believes this?

The scientific community?

The authors?

This region **is believed** to be the source
of many short-period comets.

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This region is believed to be the source
of many short-period comets [7].

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This region is believed to be the source
of many short-period comets [7].

All this reference call adds
is where one can find more

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Wed 5 Dec 2007 | Het Pand | Gent | Belgium

Plenary session | 17:45-18:30

Identifying people when people matter is an issue of accuracy, not of style

23 700 000

This region **is believed** to be the source
of many short-period comets.

37 600 000

It **is assumed** that initially the Earth
started out with vast amounts of iron
dissolved in the world's acidic seas.

40 700 000

However, it **is recommended** that women who
will be pregnant during flu season get the shot.

Google hits

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Identify people (when people matter) in whichever way is accurate

In the third person

Astronomers believe this region to be the source ...

Asimov *et al.* believe this region to be ... [7]

In the first person

We believe this region to be the source of ...

Our observations suggest this region to be ...

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For maximum impact, use *we*
to mean *we, the authors* only

Avoid *we* for communication purposes

Focus on the document (*Section 3.2 presents*)

Avoid *we* to designate everyone

Use *one*—or change the construction

Avoid *we* to designate a single author

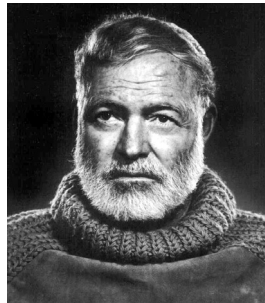
or say who else is included (*My supervisor and I*)

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Modern myths Shortcomings in scientific writing



Complicated writing
Purpose and audience

Chronological writing
The theorem approach

Depersonalized writing
Clear, accurate, concise

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To write better papers and theses,
challenge the traditional writing style

Focus on getting the message across

not on displaying the extent of your knowledge

Write reader-friendly documents

Put first what readers want to know first

Question widespread taboos

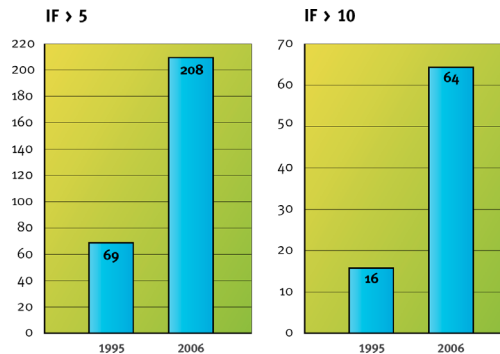
Have a good reason for how you write

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Nonverbal aspects, such as graphs,
are up for improvement, too

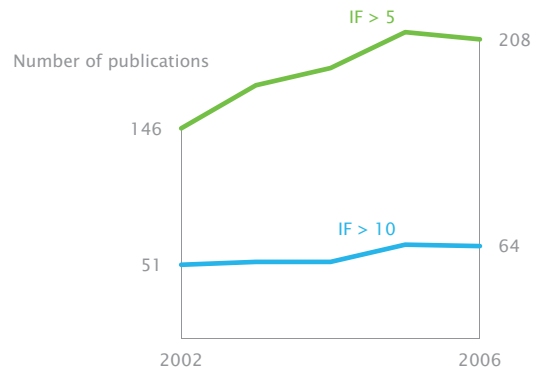


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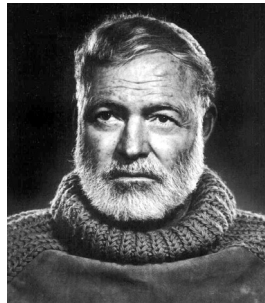


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Jean-luc Doumont

www.principiae.be

Wishing you every success
with your scientific writing