

The Chacruna Writers Style Guide

The general audience is a different beast than the academic audience.

While general audiences and academics are usually interested in the same, or very similar, content, the form and style of the writing is very different.

At Chacruna, we publish journalistic and literary nonfiction for a general audience. Here are our Four Golden Rules:

1. Your Title Must Be Descriptive, Simple and Catchy

Titles of academic texts are often broad or specialized and appear vague or confusing to non-specialist audiences. To ensure that your Chacruna article travels far and wide on social media, be sure to design an appropriate Internet article style title. For instance, rather than something like “Power and Privilege in Psychedelic Science,” describe the core message of your article in more direct terms, which might be, “Why Psychedelic Science Needs More Women and Indigenous Voices” – be descriptive, simple, provocative, and catchy. Titles should be about eight words long, with a **maximum of ten words** to match the social media architecture.

2. Your First Sentence Needs to Invoke Wonder or Interest

- The general audience is typically impatient and somewhat lazy. When they open your article, they are immediately deciding whether or not to hit the “back” button. You need to give them a reason to stay and keep reading.
- A great trick to accomplish this is to place your conclusion or results in the first two or three sentences. A great way to lose the reader is to begin your article with something they already know.
- Imagine what keywords or terms you want people to search in order to find your article using Google or another search engine. Include these keywords and terms in your first sentence and paragraph.
- In sum, you should begin with a clear proposition; a gem of significant information that shows the reader what they will get from reading the article.

3. Tell a Story Using a Warm Voice.

General audiences typically view scientific and academic writing as cold and competent, and not warm or trustworthy. The authoritative and unemotional tone of academic writing is not appropriate for a general audience.

Here are two techniques to avoid slipping back into the cold corridors of academic writing:

- A. *Use First Person.* Don't be afraid to continuously use the pronoun "I." Also, be sure to situate your personal background and experience clearly in your "story" in a tone that is personal and not objective.
- B. *Imagine Yourself Writing to a Friend.* Whether you are writing something deeply personal or something more global, imagine your reader as an emotional being. Trade abstraction and a passive voice for "being real." For example, anecdotes are more useful than statistics in literary nonfiction.

4. Be Generous and as Simple as Possible.

Most of the people who will read your article won't know about your research and they might not know about its broader significance. Therefore, be generous when explaining ideas. When sharing ideas, you should be implicitly writing in response to the question, "Why is this idea important, broadly speaking?"

It's also very important to make sure you are actually being understood. Therefore, avoid using specialist terminology. For example, instead of "psychoneuroimmunological" or "psychophysiological," you might say, "the mind, the brain, and the immune system" and "the mind and the body."

Finally, the task of writing for a general audience requires a different article structure.

- A. *Use Short Sentences.* Your sentence should be no longer than three clauses. Generally, use one or two clause sentences.
- B. *Use Short Paragraphs.* General readers often scan articles. Each paragraph

is a potential pathway into the text. Each paragraph should have at least two sentences but should be short and should introduce an interesting new idea.

- C. *Add Subheadings.* Add a new subheading approximately every 300 words. Many readers “scan” articles. Each subheading offers a door into your story.
- D. *Conclude with Style.* Don’t finish with a repetitive summary. If you used suspense and intrigue in the beginning, then return to that while providing a sense of closure. Try to find some dynamic insights that provide greater context for your work.

The Nuts and Bolts

We invite authors to submit articles about aspects of the science, culture, and spirituality of natural psychedelics (ayahuasca, peyote, psilocybin mushrooms, iboga, etc.).

- Articles should be between 600 and 1800 words in length. Use American English spelling and grammar.
- Include All References. Use APA style, 7th Edition to format your references and document. If you discuss any research, be sure to cite the reference(s). See APA Guidelines on the next page.
- Maximum of 10 references. If possible, please include a link to one external article (an article from another website) and one internal link to another Chacruna article within your article.
- Maximum of 2 authors.
- Please include several relevant, high-quality images that you own or have permission to use. If possible, please provide **alternative text** for these images.

Extras

- Please include a 30-word biography of yourself.
- Please include a color profile photo of your face.
- Please include five keywords that represent the primary subject(s) of your article.

Use simple, generic words that a person would use to search the internet for your article topic. Make sure these words are within the text and title.

- Please include a two- to three-sentence summary (maximum 150 words) of the article that includes these keywords.
- Send one to three photos with captions, photo credits, and alternative text for each image.
- Send this information in a separate file named: Extra_AuthorLastName

We hold the right to reject publication of articles at Chacruna at any time in the publishing process.

Please visit our [Chacruna Chronicles page](#) for more information, our publishing agreements, and video recording instructions.

American Psychological Association (APA) style

APA style can be accessed at [Purdue Owl APA formatting guide](#)

You can also use the APA style guide, 7th Edition for formatting guidelines

<http://www.apastyle.org>

Use footnotes sparingly, only for explanations, not for citations. If the information can be incorporated in the text, do not use a footnote. All works cited in the text should be listed in the reference list at the end.

Format your submissions with one-inch borders, single or double spaced (but not multiple spaced) in Times New Roman 12, left justified except for titles. Use “0” extra space before and after paragraphs.

In-Text References consist only of the author’s name and the date of the publication:

A Work by Two Authors: Name both authors in the signal phrase or in parentheses each time you cite the work. Use the word “and” between the authors’ names within the text and use the ampersand in parentheses.

Research by Wegener and Petty (1994) supports... (Wegener & Petty, 1994)

Reference List

The reference list comes after the text and contains all the sources cited in the article.

Format the references with a hanging tab at 0.5. Remember to write the titles in the entries in sentence case, so that only the first word and proper names are capitalized. The first word after a colon is also capitalized, e.g.,

Cavnar, C. (2020). The story of how Hello Kitty became a queen: Survivors speak. *Journal of Incredulity*, 23(3), 12–34.

Titles of journals are capitalized; titles of books remain sentence-case.

Single Author

Last name first, followed by author initials.

Brown, E. (2013). *Comedy and the feminine middlebrow novel*. London, UK: Pickering & Chatto.

Two Authors

List by their last names and initials. Separate author names with a comma. Use the ampersand instead of "and."

Soto, C. J., & John, O. P. (2017). The next big five inventory (BFI-2): Developing and assessing a hierarchical model with 15 facets to enhance bandwidth, fidelity, and predictive power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(1), 117-143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000096>

A Work by Three to Twenty Authors:

List by last names and initials; commas separate author names, while the last author name is preceded again by ampersand. *This is a departure from APA 6, which only required listing the first six authors before an ellipsis and the final author's name.*

Nguyen, T., Carnevale, J. J., Scholer, A. A., Miele, D. B., & Fujita, K. (2019). Metamotivational knowledge of the role of high-level and low-level construal in goal-relevant task performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 117(5), 879-899. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000166>

List only the first author's name followed by "et al." in every in-text citation, even the first, unless doing so would create ambiguity between different sources.

(Kernis et al., 1993)

Kernis et al. (1993) suggest...

More Than Twenty Authors

List by last names and initials; commas separate author names. After the first 19 authors' names, use an ellipsis in place of the remaining author names. Then, end with the final

author's name (do not place an ampersand before it). There should be no more than twenty names in the citation in total.

Pegion, K., Kirtman, B. P., Becker, E., Collins, D. C., LaJoie, E., Burgman, R., Bell, R., DelSole, R., Min, D., Zhu, Y., Li, W., Sinsky, E., Guan, H., Gottschalck, J., Metzger, E. J., Barton, N. P., Achuthavarier, D., Marshak, J., Koster, R., . . . Kim, H. (2019). The subseasonal experiment (SubX): A multimodel subseasonal prediction experiment. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, *100*(10), 2043-2061. <https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-18-0270.1>

In “et al.,” “et” should not be followed by a period. Only “al” should be followed by a period.

If you’re citing multiple works with similar groups of authors, and the shortened “et al.” citation form of each source would be the same, you’ll need to avoid ambiguity by writing out more names. If you cited works with these authors:

Jones, Smith, Liu, Huang, and Kim (2020)

Jones, Smith, Ruiz, Wang, and Stanton (2020)

They would be cited in-text as follows to avoid ambiguity:

(Jones, Smith, Liu, et al., 2020)

(Jones, Smith, Ruiz, et al., 2020)

Since “et al.” is plural, it should always be a substitute for more than one name. In the case that et al. would stand in for just one author, write the author’s name instead.

Unknown Author: If the work does not have an author, cite the source by its title in the signal phrase or use the first word or two in the parentheses.

In in-text citations, titles of books and reports are italicized, as in the reference list; titles of articles, chapters, and web pages are in quotation marks (in the reference list these do not have quotation marks). For example:

A similar study was done of students learning to format research papers (“Using APA,” 2001).

Organization as an Author: If the author is an organization or a government agency, mention the organization in the signal phrase or in the parenthetical citation the first time you cite the source.

According to the American Psychological Association (2000), bla bla bla.

If the organization has a well-known abbreviation, include the abbreviation in brackets the first time the source is cited and then use only the abbreviation in later citations.

First citation: (Mothers Against Drunk Driving [MADD], 2000) Second citation: (MADD, 2000)

Book

In-text reference
(Pollan, 2006)

Reference list

Pollan, M. (2006). *The omnivore's dilemma: A natural history of four meals*. (New York City, NY: Penguin).

Book Chapter of other part of a book

Kelly, J. D. (2010). Seeing red: Mao fetishism, Pax Americana, and the moral economy of war. In J. D. Kelly, B. Jauregui, S. T. Mitchell, & J. Walton (Eds.), *Anthropology and global counterinsurgency* (pp. 81–82). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Journal article

Riviere, L. & Lindgren J-E. (2009). "Ayahuasca," the South American hallucinogenic drink: An ethnobotanical and chemical investigation. *Economic Botany*, 26(2), 101–129.

Article in a newspaper or popular magazine

Unlike other periodicals, p. or pp. precedes page numbers for a newspaper reference in APA style. Single pages take p., multiple pages take pp. For example,

Schultz, S. (2005, December 28). Calls made to strengthen state energy policies. *The Country Today*, pp. 1A, 2A.

Dissertation or Master's Thesis, Unpublished

Lastname, F. M. (Year). *Title of dissertation/thesis* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation/master's thesis]. Name of Institution Awarding the Degree.

Samson, J. M. (2016). *Human trafficking and globalization* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Dissertation or Master's Thesis, Published

Lastname, F. M. (Year). *Title of dissertation/thesis* (Publication No.) [Doctoral dissertation/Master's thesis, Name of Institution Awarding the Degree]. Database or Archive Name.

Angeli, E. L. (2012). *Networks of communication in emergency medical services*(Publication No. 3544643) [Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

For additional resources, see [Other Print Sources](#)

Webpage or Piece of Online Content

If the page names an individual author, cite their name first:

Lastname, F. M. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. Site name. URL

Price, D. (2018, March 23). *Laziness does not exist*.

Medium. <https://humanparts.medium.com/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01>

If the resource was written by a group or organization, use the name of the group or organization as the author. Additionally, if the author and site name are the same, omit the site name from the citation.

Group name. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. Site name. URL

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. (2019, November 21). *Justice served: Case closed for over 40 dogfighting victims*. <https://www.asPCA.org/news/justice-served-case-closed-over-40-dogfighting-victims>

If the page's author is not listed, start with the title instead.

To cite a YouTube video:

Last Name, F. M. [Username]. (Year, Month Date). *Title of video* [Video]. Streaming Service. URL

Lushi, K. [Korab Lushi]. (2016, July 3). *Albatross culture 1* [Video].

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrJRQDPjk&t=148s>

Note: The person or group who uploaded the video is considered the author. If the author's name is the same as the username, you can omit the [Username].

Blog entry or comment

Include the title of the message and the URL. Please note that titles for items in online

communities (e.g., blogs, newsgroups, forums) are not italicized. If the author's name is not available, provide the screen name.

J Dean. (2008, May 7). When the self emerges: Is that me in the mirror? [web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://www.spring.org.uk/the1sttransport>

See [here](#) for formatting for other non-print sources

Note

Chacruna uses the Oxford comma!

Please format all parts of all documents in US English.

When using the **em**-dash, use thusly: it makes a difference—if there is a need—to use the dash in its proper form, with no space. Use the **en**-dash when giving a range between items, such as 12–13 or June–August. Do not use underlines for emphasis, use italics sparingly for this purpose. Translate all foreign words in titles, putting the translation in APA format in brackets after the title, e.g.:

Labate, B. C., Policarpo, F., Rosa, P. O., & Goulart, S. L. (2017). *Drogas, Políticas Públicas e Consumidores* [Drugs, public policy, and consumers]. Campinas, Brazil: Mercado de Letras.

Remember: e.g. is “for example” and i.e. is “in other words.” Both are followed by commas. Try to avoid “and/or”; it is almost always one or the other. Write for readability, not efficiency.

Examples of Chacruna Chronicles Articles:

Sinclair, E. (2017, October 30). Can people really die from drinking ayahuasca, as announced in the media? *Chacruna Chronicles*. <https://chacruna.net/can-people-really-die-from-drinking-ayahuasca-as-announced-in-the-media/>

Schaefer, S. B. (2017, April 18). Peyote: Plant medicine for the body, mind and soul. *Chacruna Chronicles*. <https://chacruna.net/peyote-plant-medicine-body-mind-soul/>

Williams, M. T. (2019, January 16). How white feminists oppress Black women: When feminism functions as white supremacy. *Chacruna Chronicles*. <https://chacruna.net/how-white-feminists-oppress-black-women-when-feminism-functions-as-white-supremacy/>

This is Chacruna's most-read article

Dymock, A. (2020, October 7). Acid and orgasms: Why LSD failed to sexually liberate women. *Chacruna Chronicles*. <https://chacruna.net/why-isd-sex-failed-to-liberate-women/>