

Writing in my first year – Jhansi Akepogu, BSc, 2nd year

One of the challenges I faced when I started studying at uni was sticking to a word or page limit, especially because we used to be able to write as much as we wanted in high school. I also found it difficult to organise my time when I had to write several reports at once. Because I was doing a lot of similar courses, the information tended to overlap, which sometimes helped when writing several reports simultaneously. However, these similar style reports were usually due at the same time, and they tended to be quite time-consuming to write. Additionally, I found it really challenging to determine what content and how many words needed to go in the different components of articles, such as the introduction, methods, results and discussion.

To help me stick to the word count I learned to write succinctly and clearly, making sure I'd always get straight to the point rather than adding information that's not needed in a scientific article. I mainly developed these skills learning from the feedback I had been given by my lecturers. This helped me see where I went wrong, where I could improve and how I could improve it. I also found that I got better because I got a lot of practice with all these labs and reports – which in turn gave me a lot of confidence.

Reading a lot of scientific articles and familiarising myself with the kind of writing and styles that I'm expected to produce has been really helpful too.

To organise my work and time I started setting myself deadlines. For example, I'd give myself two days to write the introduction, and then another two days for the discussion. This has been really helpful for me. I used to think that putting a lot of my time into all my study was the key to success, but I realised that becoming aware of the times when I'm most focussed and making the most of that time frame allowed me to be a lot more productive. Additionally, finding the link between my lectures and reports while I'm writing, by, for example, going over reading material again, is really useful and helps me stay focussed.

To organise my work and time when it comes to labs, I make sure I recap on them while they're still fresh in my mind. For example I'd write notes, read over the content or outline bullet points of information I'm going to put into a report on the actual day of the lab, instead of waiting for a week and

forgetting what I did. It's a lot of information to take in, so getting started as early as possible is vital.

After doing all this, my writing has definitely improved. I'm now able to write a lot faster, and my time management has improved a lot too. I also feel more comfortable asking questions because I realised how important it is and how it helps with my learning. I have also built a sense of confidence with my own work. I now feel comfortable sharing it, which is important in Science because if you're ever going to do some kind research you're going to get other people's views on that.