

RESEARCH COMPONENT: OPINION ARTICLE

Opinion Article

(7.5% of Unit mark)

While preparing your Research and Development (R&D) proposal you have started reading literature relevant to your research project. You used this knowledge to write the background for your R&D proposal. Here you expand on this and write an 'Opinion' article as published in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution (TREE)* (note that almost all Life Science disciplines have a dedicated *Trends* journal although not all of them publish 'Opinion' articles). Your opinion article should place your research topic in a broader context. Your opinion article should not be a summary of what has been published on your topic in the past. Instead you will write a synthesis of the literature relevant to your research topic. This opinion article forms the basis of the general introduction to your thesis. The amount of 'tweaking' you will need to do when writing the general introduction to your thesis depends on how much your research has changed since finishing your article.

Please use the following guidelines for writing your opinion article.

Instructions for Authors – *TREE* Opinion articles

***Trends in Ecology & Evolution (TREE)* is a journal of news, review and comment, designed to help a general audience of ecologists and evolutionary biologists to stay abreast of current trends throughout the field. Please follow these instructions carefully, because our editorial policy differs in important respects from that of primary research journals:**

<h3>General Considerations</h3>

A ***TREE Opinion*** article should present a personal, very authoritative, viewpoint on a research-related topic, rather than a balanced review of this topic. The aim should be to stimulate debate or new research. They can cover very timely controversial topics, provide a new framework for, or interpretation of, an old problem or current issue, or speculate on the implications of some recently published research or data (that merits a more in-depth discussion than that provided by other sections).

Opinion articles will often, although not always, be based on recent research. Although the subject area need not be generally timely, some aspect of the subject should be highly topical e.g. new data that renew interest in a specific controversy or debate. Articles that merely outline recent advances in a field rather than give a strong *opinion* on them are not suitable for this section of the journal (more suited to the Review section).

In particular, to maximize the impact of their article, authors should bear in mind the following considerations:

- Start with a strong introduction outlining the timeliness, importance and rationale behind your article (why the subject is important, why now).
- Finish with clearly stated conclusions, including an indication of expected developments in the subject and the direction that future research should take.

- Do not include unpublished data, formal models or meta-analysis. Very very occasionally, unpublished data can be referred to, but only when absolutely essential; they should be clearly identified as unpublished and never be used to substantiate any significant point.
- Although subjective, an opinion article should not be used to dwell excessively on the author's own research or excessively criticize others', except where criticism is constructive.
- We encourage the use of straightforward illustrations, simple tables and short boxes to enhance the message of the main text.

Your readers will range from student to professor, so when writing for us, please aim to make your **Opinion** accessible to the entire readership of *TREE*. You can assume that your audience is competent in the basic language of the subject, but may require explanation or definition of technical terms, concepts and assumptions specific to your topic. Avoid jargon, but do not oversimplify or cut corners: be accurate and precise throughout.

Specific Guidelines

To help you prepare your article, please take careful note of the following guidelines. Those given under the 'optional' section are available for use if you wish. Marking criteria instructions are also listed to assist you with your review.

Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titles should be short and enticing • No more than eight words • Avoid very specialist terminology
Authors names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not relevant
Abstract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly explain the necessary background • Encapsulate the main conclusions for a non-specialist readership. • Emphasize the opinion you are trying to put forward. <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Between 100 & 150 words</p>
Teaser	<p>In addition to the Abstract, all Opinion articles should include a very short 'teaser', which will be used to convey rapidly to the reader why the article is relevant and interesting. The teaser should be a short, single sentence (20-35 words) - the equivalent of the first sentence of a news report - and will appear under the article's title in BioMedNet's e-mailed tables of contents, newsletters and such. It should be a simple statement highlighting your article and, importantly, your opinion, not a comprehensive summary of the work.</p>
Opinion structure	<p>To help guide the reader through the article, your 'Opinion' should follow the basic structure outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with a short introduction aimed at nonspecialist readers. • Use subheadings to guide readers through the article. • End with a strong take-home message, including an indication of future directions.

Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinions must be between 1500 and 2500 words max. (2500 words (including spaces) is approximately 7 pages, single space.) This word limit does not include text in boxes, reference list, tables or figure legends
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reference list should not be exhaustive – it should simply alert the readers to the key literature on which your opinion is based. Reviews should be cited if necessary to refer to older data

Optional Guidelines

Figures*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of clear figures is strongly encouraged. Titles should be short and explanatory. Legends must fully explain the figure without reference to the text
Tables*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require a single sentence title but no legend. Abbreviations and full explanations should be footnoted (using letters).
Text Boxes*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Didactic aids which should be used to display additional information that would interfere with the flow of the main text. Ideal for providing explanations of basic concepts or theories, giving detailed mechanisms or discussing case studies. Text Boxes can occasionally contain small figures and tables (with legend or title). Maximum of 400 words per Box and 8 references (cited within the box - see checklist below) No more than 3 boxes per article.
Conclusions /Outstanding Questions Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These can be summarized at the end of the article if desired. Counted separately from Text Boxes (above). Maximum of 200 words. Only if necessary
Glossaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For use when Opinions contain extensive amounts of specialist language (for instance, terms unknown to senior undergraduates). Counted separately from Text Boxes (above)