

APRIL is the best acronym

 Check for updates

Abbreviations Prevent Readability and dIminish influence (APRIL).

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a reSearch Project In Need of funds must be in Search of a TErrific acRonym (SPIN-STER). And Brainstorming Ideas for Grant Acronyms (BIG-As) can certainly be a fun and creative group activity. However, sprinkling research papers with As Many Acronyms And Abbreviations As Possible (AMAAAAP) makes them very hard to read and therefore limits the Number Of PEOple (NOPE) the work will reach.

At *Nature Physics*, we want to make our papers accessible to a large NOPE, and we therefore recommend using As Few Acronyms And Abbreviations As Possible (AFAAAAP) and, if they are necessary at all, stick to a Short and Evocative Acronym List (SEAL) with items that are Widely used, Obvious, Known and Easy to remember (WOKE). A WOKE SEAL will allow you to include the maximum NOPE in your readership.

But how does one select a good WOKE SEAL? First, remember AFAAAAP and only put those abbreviations on your SEAL that occur at least five – or better ten – times within the article. Then check your SEAL for Whimsical Or Reprehensible Meanings (WORMs). For example, if an acronym spells out a word that would send a pre-school child into an uncontrollable fit



of laughter, or an abbreviation coincides with that of an organization known for its war crimes, it ought to be removed. Finally, if you recognize most entries on your de-WORMed SEAL from other publications, you are likely looking at a WOKE SEAL.

Although too many acronyms and APRIL, they can – when used wisely – streamline scientific communication and provide much-needed

levity, as in the case of SPINSTER. However, overusing and carelessly choosing abbreviations will alienate your reader. The good news is that, by following the de-WORMed WOKE SEAL strategy outlined in this Editorial, you too can Write Articles For Formidable Legibility Enhancement (WAFFLE).

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