



SCANDINAVIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

POPULAR SCIENCE WRITING

Archaeologists are familiar with the academic, or scientific, writing medium. The crowd for academic texts is always fellow researchers or, for an example, educated historians interested in the subject of matter. We at *Scandinavia Archaeology* consider academic writing important, a must-know-how-to, but we also consider popular science writing as important. Remember that the scientific results are just as important in both academic and popular science writing. So, what is the difference between the two? Here, we will introduce you to a set of rules which could be helpful during your writing process. And remember: the most important thing while writing popular science is actually for the author to have fun and experiment with a for you, maybe, unexplored writing medium. Do not be afraid to live a little!

WHO ARE YOU WRITING FOR?

As an author you are almost always familiar with your crowd, and who you speak to with your text material. As mentioned earlier, academic/scientific papers/articles are written to spread information to fellow scientists. In your case, other archaeologists or even historians interested in your knowledge. **In popular science writing, on the other hand, the crowd could possibly be harder to target.** In your case, writing texts for *Scandinavian Archaeology*, your targeted crowd are people interested in... well, dah... Scandinavian archaeology. It is people from all around the world, on different educational levels, some familiar with archaeology and some might have a greater amount of insight. To please our crowd, you are supposed to fit your article somewhere in between these two groups. This is done with the use of an appropriate language and style.

THE USAGE OF ACADEMIC TERMS: MAKE IT SIMPLE

The academic language is filled with terms, and the meaning of these are obvious to us archaeologists. Meanwhile, people outside of the field are, in many cases, not familiar with

these and have no clue what context to put them in. A fun test could be and try to explain, for an example, dendrochronology or 14C to one of your non-archaeologist friends in a simplified way. Finding it hard? Yes, because it is, and therefore it is important to find ways around this while writing popular science: **DO NOT MAKE IT MORE COMPLICATED THAN IT HAS TO BE!** Explain 14C, for an example, as a method used to date certain materials such as bone, coal etc. Do not over-do it! Remember, this is not something you are going to hand in to your teacher to grade, this is to hand the public crowd with knowledge you consider important. For that information to actually be useful it has to be understandable.

TITLE AND SUBTITLES: SHOULD I STAY, OR SHOULD I GO?

How do you make people want to read your article to begin with? Well, you create a tempting, exciting title, of course! If this does not seem too important, it could actually be a question of if the person will read your text or just leave it be. This is the first thing your potential reader will encounter while scrolling through our page, the title is what draws attention to your work. The same thing goes for subtitles; make them interesting but at the same time informational.

STYLE OF LANGUAGE: CALL YOUR GRANDMA!

Maybe you have read a lot of magazines about history or archaeology, but I bet you that you have read more academic papers about this than popular science articles. One of the biggest differences while writing popular science, coming from an academic field, is the language of style. **Think of popular science as a medium to tell a science-based story and not merely a process, explanation of methods or results.** As an author, you will attract a bigger amount of readers by making the language vivid. Do not use words that are considered too complicated, but at the same time, do not write a story for a 6-year old. This is one of the biggest challenges as an author of popular science, but you will soon notice what works and what do not work. To be sure readers follow your story, send it to people outside of the field and ask them to read it through and get back to you with feedback. This is a great way to ensure that others will enjoy and understand your text, without googling certain terms etc. Do not feel ashamed calling your grandma and ask her to read your work, she could actually be the best of judges when it comes to your writing!

Just a reminder regarding language: in popular science English you always write out the full words. For an example, we do not spell it out as “shouldn’t”, we write it “should not”. Another important key to writing good popular science texts is to keep the length of sentences moderate.

REGARDING REFERENCES

References are important, but they just as equally exhausting. One great thing about popular science texts are the no-need-of-references-in-the-text-fact. Great, right? **Use references only when directly citing someone in your text.** Of course, you will still need a reference list where people can find your sources, but this will be named “Further reading” and allows the reader to dive deeper into your subject on their own. The “Further reading” list will be published in your article.

FROM START TO FINISH

Before starting off with your writing process, **make a smaller list with ideas from start to finish.** Authors of books do, in many cases, write their ending before even thinking of the introducing pages. This is done to have a clear picture of where you want your text to go, in what direction you want to lead your readers and with what kind of experience you want your readers to leave your text with. One way of forming an article from start to finish is to come up with a set of subtitles. In that way, you have a clear vision of what information is to go where in the text and also how you want to guide the reader through it. Another great trick while writing popular science is to start off with a phenomenon relatable to the general crowd and **tie the knot in the end by going back to the beginning of your text.**

Note: it is very important that your main questions and the subject of your article are presented early on in the text for the reader to get a grip of what they are going to experience.

Now, what are you waiting for? Start writing! And remember to have fun and experiment with your style of writing, always! Another important message we want to send out to you are do not be afraid, go for it and use us as a support in your writing process! We will gladly help out because you are, let us be real, very important to us at *Scandinavian Archaeology*. We wish you good luck and have fun!

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