

Perspective, Opinion, and Commentary Pieces

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It is important for researchers to decide the type of research article they are going to write and publish. The paper you write will depend mainly on the type of study conducted. It will also depend on the [intended audience and the guidelines](#) from the journal to which the work will be submitted.

The objective of any research is to add to the existing knowledge in the field of study. The paper must thus present research and results in a clear and concise manner. It also ensures that your paper is comprehensible and other researchers, who may want to reproduce your results, are able to do so. You can also contribute to your field of interest by sharing your expertise or views in the form of a [review of a research area](#) or a related policy. Several formats allow you to provide your personal take on many topics that influence your field of interest. We present here a description of three such formats—perspective, opinion, and commentary—to help you decide which type fit with your intended audience and outcome.

Perspective Pieces

A perspective “piece” is a personal opinion in writing that is a review of a certain topic. Usually, these are [short essays](#) that are intended to review concepts in a particular field based on writer’s own assessment. For instance, *Nature* often publishes peer-reviewed essays that discuss research models and concepts to help raise awareness of new ideas in the field and develop new study methods.

Perspective pieces also provide information on key findings and the [latest developments](#) in that discipline. The writers (often more than one) are experts in their field of study and discuss the latest research and its implications. They also provide highlights from relevant conferences and seminars. These pieces include an abstract, reference list, and figures (if necessary).

When considering writing a perspective piece, make sure that the reviews are of **concepts** and **not of the research studies** and focused on the message you want to convey. These essays can be anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 words depending on the journal.

Opinion Pieces

An opinion piece is a short article that conveys the author’s viewpoint on a research study. It presents a personal review of, for example, the methods and analyses done in the study. It also provides the author’s viewpoint on the researcher’s hypothesis and its shortcomings (if any). These pieces are meant to provide constructive criticism. Although they are personal observations, evidence should be available to support the author’s critique of the study.

Some journals consider and welcome opinions from readers as short correspondence. In some cases, the editors will solicit a longer opinion piece to publish it as an article. Although reader’s comments are accepted, unsolicited opinion articles are not. Moreover, some *journals* refer to opinion pieces as short editorials. They invite these editorials from the readers and encourage discussion on an issue that is critical to research community. Most opinion pieces or editorials are no more than 1,000 words, with no abstract and no more than five references. Tables and figures are usually not part of these pieces.

Commentaries

A commentary is a more in-depth analysis written to draw attention to a work already published. Commentaries are somewhat like “reviews” in that the author presents his or her analysis of a work and why it would be of interest to a specific audience. Depending on the journal, commentaries can differ in scope and length from 1500 to 3000 words. Some journals may have *requirements* that are more specific. They may expect writers to analyze other subjects, such as funding, political issues, and career opportunities, that would be of interest to those in that research area. Most commentaries are subject to formal peer review.

Which Should You Chose?

Which format is best for you depends on a few factors to consider. Who is your audience? What do you hope to accomplish? Were you commissioned to write the piece?

If you wish to submit an unsolicited piece, you must remember that [journal submission](#) rules vary. Some journals do not accept any such pieces and others will publish only those that are peer reviewed.

It can be to your advantage to offer to write any of these papers. As a researcher, your opinion should matter to your colleagues, especially if you have already published original research. In addition, if you are commissioned or solicited by the editors of a particular journal to write a piece, it validates your expertise and respect from those within your field of study and can help further your career.

Several journals provide detailed information about these and other types of articles. Be sure to check your sources for detailed information.

Have you published any of three types of research articles? Please share your thoughts with us by posting in the comment section!

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