

**Mara Riminucci**

F1000 Faculty Member

Rheumatology & Clinical
Immunology / Bone
Biology, Osteoporosis &
Other Diseases of BoneSapienza University of
Rome
Rome
Italy**Alessandro Corsi** F1000 Associate Faculty
MemberRheumatology & Clinical
Immunology / Bone
Biology, Osteoporosis &
Other Diseases of BoneSapienza University of
Rome
Rome
Italy

Classified as

Good for Teaching

Introduction and Results before or after the Figures when writing a scientific paper? This is the problem. In the manuscript, the author offers convincing advice on how to write a scientific paper and suggests that starting with Introduction and Results makes it easier to tell a story. However, this approach is not followed by everybody. Probably, as properly noted by Ferdinando Boero in his recommendation (1), this is a result of the computer era. Those of us who started to work in the pre-computer era remember that producing hand-made figures was a very time-consuming practice and only when the story was clear the figures could be prepared. Now, by using a computer, figures can be easily prepared at the end of each individual experiment, multiple figures from different experiments can be promptly mounted together and the panels that fit better with what the author(s) want(s) to say can be then easily chosen. In addition, we all are aware of the fact that scientific journals have changed compared to the pre-computer era. Now, it seems more important to provide a plethora of information rather than a story and to show the data in impressive multi-panel figures rather than in clear and essential figures. This strongly influences young researchers. We too experience the fact that asking a young colleague to summarize a paper usually results in a very accurate and meticulous description of the details with little space for the general significance and implication. It is as if it were more relevant to look at the different fingers that indicate the moon rather than at the moon itself.

Thus, this article reminds us that we have to generate figures for the story and not to tailor the story according to the available figures. We think that this must be kept in mind when preparing manuscripts but also when preparing scientific talks. There are many good reasons why young researchers should read this article before they start "to think about publishing" (2).

References

1. F1000Prime Recommendation of [Sanes JR, *elife* 2019 08 06, 8].
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Disclosures

None declared

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