

Results

Members of the Biochemical Society were invited to co-operate in this survey aimed at establishing what style is most readable and acceptable for scientific reports and papers. The respondents voted clearly in favour of direct, active writing with a minimum of specialist vocabulary, a judicious mixture of personal and impersonal constructions, short and uncomplicated sentences and liberal paragraphing. In the survey, a reasonably well written version in 'traditional' passive, impersonal style came in as a poor second. The full results were as shown in the Table.

Results of the survey made with the co-operation of the Biochemical Society

Version	Description	Number of times chosen as 'best'	
(J)	Direct, verbs mainly active, minimum of special vocabulary, judicious use of personal and impersonal constructions, sentences of varied length but mainly short and not complex, 2 paragraphs.	283	38.2%
w	Reasonably direct, verbs mainly passive, some roundabout phrasing to avoid personal constructions, reasonable amount of special vocabulary, sentences of varied length but some long, involved constructions, 2 paragraphs.	146	19.7%
(G)	Conversational but <i>clear</i> clear , verbs mainly active, little special vocabulary, some colloquial expressions, excessive use of personal constructions, sentences of varied length but mainly short and of simple structure, 3 paragraphs.	137	18.5%
A	Reasonably direct, verbs mainly passive, some roundabout phrasing to avoid personal constructions, moderate use of special vocabulary, sentences almost all short, consequent bitty effect, 2 paragraphs.	104	14.0%
(P)	Roundabout and woolly, verbs mainly passive, moderate use of specialized vocabulary, much verbose phrasing, sentences often long and involved, 4 paragraphs.	37	5.0%
(O)	Reasonably direct, verbs mainly passive, much roundabout phrasing to avoid personal constructions, consequent extensive use of abstractions, much use of nouns as adjectives, sentences often long and too tightly packed with information, 1 paragraph.	34	4.6%%
		741	100.0%