

# Contributing to the *Journal* of the BAA

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All members of the BAA are encouraged to share their observations and ideas with others by contributing to the *Journal*, either directly or through reports published by Directors of Sections. This paper provides guidance on preparing and submitting material for publication.

## Introduction

For 107 years the *Journal* has been the life-blood of the BAA, bringing together its far-flung members and providing a lasting record of their work. This is as much the case today as a hundred years ago – in fact it is probably true to say that more individual members contribute in one way or another to the *Journal* now than at any time in the Association's history. Many more of you may have thought about sending in material, but are not sure of the right procedure – I hope this article will encourage you to do so.

## Papers

The major articles in the *Journal* are known as Papers, reflecting the publication's history and status as a refereed research journal for the amateur astronomical community. You do not have to be a BAA member in order to submit a paper, but non-members wishing to submit contributions are urged before doing so to study recent issues of the *Journal* in a library or elsewhere, to note the style and nature of the content. Material of particular interest to amateur observers, and reports of amateur observational projects, are most likely to gain acceptance.

Please follow these guidelines in preparing your material for publication.

- 1. Style.** Try to write in plain, uncomplicated English, avoiding waffle and stating your points clearly and concisely. You do not have to write in the third person or in stilted 'scientific' language. Use a spelling checker if you have one, and be particularly careful with technical terms or proper names which may be unfamiliar to the Editor. It is always good practice to leave your draft alone for a few days and then re-read it: try to put yourself in the position of your potential reader, who can be thought of as an interested layperson who knows less about the subject than you do. After finishing your piece, will they understand better and know more?
- 2. Text** should be typed or word-processed in 10-point or 12-point type, double line-spaced, and printed on one side only of A4 or (US) Letter paper. Leave a margin of at least 3cm on all sides, and number the pages sequentially at the top. The first paragraph should be a short abstract or summary, which can be used in indexing or elsewhere as a good indication of the content of the paper. Break up the main text with subheadings to a maximum of two levels, but please note that numbering of paragraphs is not required and if present, will normally be removed in editing. Unless you are familiar with equation writing software, equations are best added clearly by hand in black or dark blue ink.
- 3. References** are numbered sequentially from the start of the paper. Indicate a reference tag by enclosing it in square brackets, thus:[1] Note that the reference tag occurs **after** any punctuation at the end of the relevant clause or sentence, as shown here.[2] Because of the varied formatting used by different word-processors, please do **not** attempt to type your reference tags in 'superscript' form as you see them on the printed page – this formatting will be added later. In particular, please do not use the 'footnote' facility which your program may provide, as the Editor will then have the tedious task of removing all your careful work and manually re-entering it as plain text.

List the references in sequential order at the end of the paper. A **bibliography** is a general list of useful background reading, and does not normally require tags within the text. The Editor's task would be greatly helped if authors would study the reference style currently in use in the *Journal*, and attempt to copy it in their own lists, noting particularly the following:

- The reference number is separated from the author's name by a tab character only, with no full stop or spaces;
- There is no comma between the author's name and initials;
- If there are several initials, they are separated by a full stop and a space;
- Unless the reference includes a grammatically complete sentence of text, there is no full stop at the end of the line.

**4. Figures.** Illustrate the paper as freely as possible – if in doubt, send a selection of figures and allow the Editor to choose, although please be sure to make it clear in the covering letter if you do not expect all the figures with the paper to be used. Figures should be supplied at a larger scale than will eventually be used for printing, as minor blemishes and inconsistencies are removed by the reduction process. If diagrams include text or labels remember that these will be correspondingly reduced in size, and must therefore be drawn large enough if they are to remain legible. Line diagrams should be uniformly black, laser printed or hand-inked; if a dot matrix printer must be used, please ensure the ribbon is fresh and black and the print quality is set to maximum. Avoid dot matrix printers for diagrams if possible. Photographs may be black and white or colour, prints, slides or computer images (see below): colour reproduction is now available in the *Journal* about twice a year, but unless colour is essential, figures will normally be reproduced in black and white.

All figures should be numbered on the back, and if there is any possibility of doubt, the top should be indicated. Note this particularly applies to slides, which may have been labelled ‘upside down’ on the frame for projection. Figures should be referenced by number in the text, or the manuscript marked in the margin of where the figure should appear. Write informative captions for all figures, in a separate numbered list at the end of the paper.

**5. Tables.** If tables are very large or complex, please try to provide camera-ready copy in a size that can be reduced to fit on a standard *Journal* page, or an Encapsulated Postscript (EPS) disk file. Note there should be no lines separating columns or rows, except a pair of fine horizontal lines on either side of the (italicised) column headings, and a single horizontal line at the end of the table. Where camera-ready copy is not provided, please use only single tab characters (not spaces) to separate the columns in a standard word-processed file. A reasonably formatted hardcopy print of the table should also be supplied so that the Editor can make sure the columns line up correctly – those who are not expert with word-processors may find it easier to set tables in a non-proportionally spaced font such as Courier.

**6. Submission of papers.** UK-based authors should submit **three** copies of the text and photocopied figures, with originals, to the Papers Secretary, whose address is found in the front of every *Journal*. Authors based overseas may send a single copy of the paper (with original figures) if they wish. Please be sure to pack the material carefully for the post, and keep a copy yourself for reference when the referees’ reports are received. Papers are normally seen by two referees, who may make suggestions to the author for improvements. If after revision the referees and the Papers Secretary recommend it, the paper will be accepted for publication by Council, when the final draft, original figures and disk file if available (see below) are passed to the Editor, and join the publication queue. You will be sent a proof of the text before printing, and have the opportunity to request up to five complimentary copies of the *Journal* in which it appears, and to purchase offprints if you wish. Except in unusual circumstances, the current delay between acceptance and publication is approximately one year. If you have a good reason why more rapid publication would be desirable (perhaps the paper is currently topical, or the results are of particular immediate interest) please mention this to the Papers Secretary when first submitting the manuscript.

**7. Supplying electronic text.** The *Journal* is no longer typeset at the printing house. All text is formatted by the Editor and sent as computer files to the printers, who scan the figures, complete the layout and return page-proofs for final checking. Authors are encouraged to save retyping by supplying a computer file of their final manuscript, and this should be sent to the Papers Secretary after the referees’ suggestions have been incorporated. Document files formatted as Microsoft Word (version 6.0 or lower) or WordPerfect (v. 5.1 or lower) can be accepted directly; if using any other word processor, please output an RTF or ASCII (plain text) file. PC 3.5-inch diskettes are preferred, although Apple disks may also be accepted. Short papers may also be sent by e-mail. Unless using Word or WordPerfect, please do not attempt formatting of headings, bold or italic type etc., as this creates false characters which must be stripped out before the file can be processed. Headings should not be underlined or written in all capital letters.

**8. Image files.** If the illustrations for the paper are computer image files, please also supply hardcopy of at least inkjet standard (colour if appropriate). Images should be supplied on disk in TIF, GIF or JPG format in the maximum available resolution. Line diagrams can be accepted as TIF, GIF, Bitmap or EPS files, but good quality hardcopy printouts should always also be provided.

### Other contributions

As well as formal papers, there are many other opportunities to contribute to the *Journal*. For the following sections, the preparation guidelines are similar to the above, although one copy only is required. This should be sent direct to the Editor, with a PC disk file if possible. Short text contributions of less than about 1500 words may also be sent by e-mail, which for letters and book reviews is the preferred method of submission. Hardcopy of e-mailed contributions should also be provided if there are any special characters or mathematical symbols which

might not transmit correctly. If you use an Apple computer, please do not try to send formatted files or attached images by e-mail – just copy and paste your text into a standard e-mail message. Except for book reviews, proofs are not normally provided for short contributions.

#### *Letters to the editor*

Letters are welcome on almost any subject to do with astronomy, especially those of particular interest to amateurs. The Editor reserves the right to shorten or edit letters in the interests of clarity, brevity and style, and to reject material that she does not find significant or interesting. Please remember to include your full postal address, and an e-mail address if you have one.

#### *Book and software reviews*

Reviews are normally prepared by invitation only. If you are sent a book or other publication by a publisher and would like to review it for the *Journal*, please contact the Editor first to avoid possible duplication. If you would like to join our reviewers' panel, please write to me, indicating your particular areas of interest and qualifications if any. When I send you a book you will also be sent guidelines on how to prepare and submit your review.

#### *Notes and News*

Section Directors are encouraged to submit short occasional articles on interesting results or forthcoming events of general interest to members. Other members may also send in short articles for 'Notes and News', provided they are of more than local interest (unfortunately we do not have space to report the meetings and events of local astronomical societies.) Please include illustrations if available, and if not submitting by e-mail, enclose a PC disk file of your text if you can. Disks and illustrations will be returned following publication if a stamped addressed envelope is included.

#### *Observers' Forum*

Images, photographs and drawings are always welcome for 'Observers' Forum', as are short notes of interesting observations or techniques. Please remember to supply full captions for your pictures, including details of the instrument, and film and exposure details.

#### *Cover photographs*

May I make a particular appeal to the 'old-fashioned' photographers still out there: I am always very short of high-quality photographs for the cover of the *Journal*, for which CCD images are rarely suitable, and would like to see more of your work. Because of the scale of reproduction, large-scale black and white prints (not slides) are best for the cover, although slides are quite acceptable elsewhere in the journal. If you are preparing a print with the cover of the *Journal* in mind, a portrait-format image involves the Editor in the least work of cropping and manipulating the material; enlarging or reducing the size of the image, however, is not usually a problem.

### **Publication elsewhere**

Papers submitted to other journals should not normally also be sent to the BAA. However, if a paper has been rejected by another publication because of a different publishing policy, this can be mentioned when submitting here, and will not necessarily prevent its acceptance. Material formerly published in Section newsletters, if expanded and thought to be of general interest, may be used in the *Journal*. Please inform the Editor if you are sending other items (particularly images and photographs) to commercial publications at the same time as they are submitted to the *Journal*.

Following *Journal* publication, authors retain copyright of their contributions, so you are of course free to arrange any other publication you can. We ask only that an acknowledgment be given that the item appeared originally in the *Journal* of the British Astronomical Association. *Journal* papers are indexed on the Astrophysical Data System on the World Wide Web, and letters to the Editor and selected book reviews appear on the *Journal*'s own Web pages.

### **Conclusion**

The opportunity to contribute to the *Journal* and thereby present your work to a wider audience is one of the major benefits of belonging to the BAA. I hope the above has been helpful to anyone who is thinking of submitting a paper or other contribution: the Papers Secretary and I look forward to hearing from you!

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