

A student's viewpoint on the æsthetics of publications, from the perspective of effectiveness

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Introduction

Writing a document is a difficult task. Why? Because the writer needs to think about

- ▶ the appearance of the document, and
- ▶ its content.

Both constitute the *message* to transmit.

Table of contents

What you need to do to write a good article

What \LaTeX brings you to improve your document's content

Graphical æsthetics

Writing æsthetics

End

Bibliography

What you need to do to write a good article

Think about the worst documents you ever read! What were their problems?

1. Use **LaTeX**, so that you
 - 1.1 focus more on the content of the document than on its appearance;
 - 1.2 gain extra consistency;
 - 1.3 structure your work: `\section`, `\subsection`, ...;
 - 1.4 make a clear document (at least with the default layout!),
2. **Structure**: a reader should understand what your work is generally about when reading the ToC,
3. What is a **clear** document? Try to
 - 3.1 Write *concisely* (use the most direct way);
 - 3.2 Write *precisely* (are the words sufficiently precise?);
 - 3.3 Write *appropriately* (are the words adapted to the audience?);
 - 3.4 Write *univocally* (use univocal sentences, and the dictionary),
4. **Avoid re-reading** your article **immediately** after having worked a long time on it. Let it sleep and then re-read it later, with \neq eyes.

What \LaTeX brings you to improve your document's content

\LaTeX brings you

1. Structure: this is an opportunity!
2. Automation (of tasks),
3. Dynamic referencing.

They contribute to extra consistency, which is an important value, especially in long texts.

Graphical æsthetics I

1. Why not? Having a well-written article is nice, but wouldn't it be better if it was pretty?
2. Not too much
 - 2.1 2D vs 3D pie charts example;
 - 2.2 Prettify as much as possible;
 - 2.3 Do not overload;
 - 2.4 Do not introduce ambiguities;
 - 2.5 Graphics (and prettifying) should serve your document!
3. After having placed a drawing in a document, ask yourself if it
 - 3.1 does not introduce ambiguities (e.g. univocal);
 - 3.2 is really useful (i.e. not redundant);
 - 3.3 conveys the information directly, or if it can be drawn differently to be understood in an easier fashion (pie charts example);
 - 3.4 is minimal;
 - 3.5 helps the viewer think about the information rather than the design;

Graphical æsthetics II

- 3.6 encourages the reader's eye to compare the data,
4. Use as possible the same program, style & font for graphics,
5. Eliminate everything that will “distract the eye,”
6. Do not apply random colors: choose them,
7. Prefer colors to dashing patterns,
8. Avoid clip-arts except if they are recurrent: ‘TIP,’ ‘PITFALL-PREVENTION,’ ...
9. Use interesting captions,
10. Reference the graphics in your main text,
11. Graphics are first-class citizens of your papers!

Writing æsthetics

Pictures and drawings are not the only documents which contribute to a document's æsthetics. There are still some textual elements you might want to work on, even if \LaTeX does most of the job.

1. Emphasize what *needs to be emphasized*, and do not use `\underline`,
2. Use `\textbf` only for hierarchic elements,
3. Choose a font that matches your context and that looks pretty. Default is Computer Modern,
4. Use `fancyhdr` so that (at least) the current section's title is displayed at the top or bottom of the page,
5. Keep in mind that the reader needs to know where (s)he is in your structure.

The End

"The only mistakes in typography are things done in ignorance."
→ take decisions, but knowingly [2].

Questions? Ask the speaker
me .

Thanks for listening
to the speaker .

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