

(Continued)

He stretches his shoulders and takes a glance at his watch. Twenty minutes have gone by since he started reading. By now, he has built a first and strong impression. Even though the article is of moderate length, it is too long for the depth of the proposed contribution. A letter would have been a more appropriate format than a full-fledged paper. Poor researcher. He will have to say this, using diplomatic skills so as not to be discouraging, for he knows the hopes and expectations that all writers share. What a shame, he thinks. Had he accepted the paper, his citation count would have increased. Now the hard work of thorough analysis lies ahead. He picks up his coffee mug and takes a large gulp.

The first impression of a paper is formed after a partial reading. During the first 20 minutes or so, a reviewer does not have time to read the whole paper, in particular the methodology and the results/discussion sections. I have therefore decided to cover in part II only those parts of a paper that are read during the rapid time in which the first impression is formed. This decision was also based on comments from scientists who have published many papers. They stated that the methodology and results sections of their paper were the easiest and fastest to write, but it was the other parts that were difficult and took time: the abstract, introduction, and conclusions. As for the title, structure, and visuals, they recognised that they had underestimated the key role these parts play in creating the first impression.

The impact of the quality of these parts goes beyond creating a favourable first impression for the reviewer and reader. Improved