

How (and How Not) to Write a Good Systems Paper.

Roy Levin, David Redell.
ACM SIGOPS Operating Systems
Review, vol. 17, no. 3, July 1983.

- Originality
 - Know related work, don't "rename" old work, clear problem, LPU (least publishable units), insightful comparison, spread of citations
- Reality
 - Systems work calls for implementation & use, new ideas papers valuable but easily rejected
- Lessons learned
 - Tell'm what you are going to tell'm, then tell'm, then tell'm what you told'm
 - Good papers have admissions of hard lessons learned
 - Avoid extrapolating from small N results
- Choices
 - Have alternatives considered, motivate all alternatives, comparing to bad alternatives is an easy rejection

- Context
 - Assumptions are critical and need to be very clear, justify all assumptions, do sensitivity analysis whenever possible, minimize unnecessary math and models
- Focus
 - Ruthlessly cut words that don't address core points, but report issues that do address core points thoroughly, state most important points of key related work
- Presentation
 - Avoid dangling & forward references, avoid acronyms unless very widely used, use names consistently, define terms before using them
 - Abstract is NOT a table of contents, it is a concise report of key ideas and advertisement to read the paper
 - Never write notes to reviewer like “table to come before conference”
 - Use excellent English composition with minimum jargon