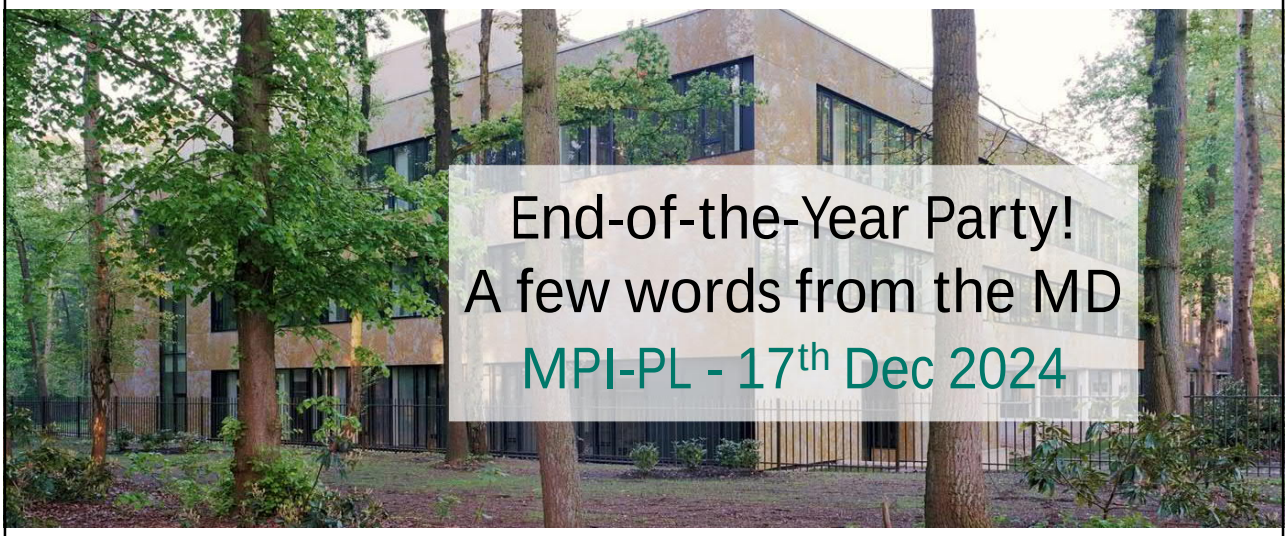
MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

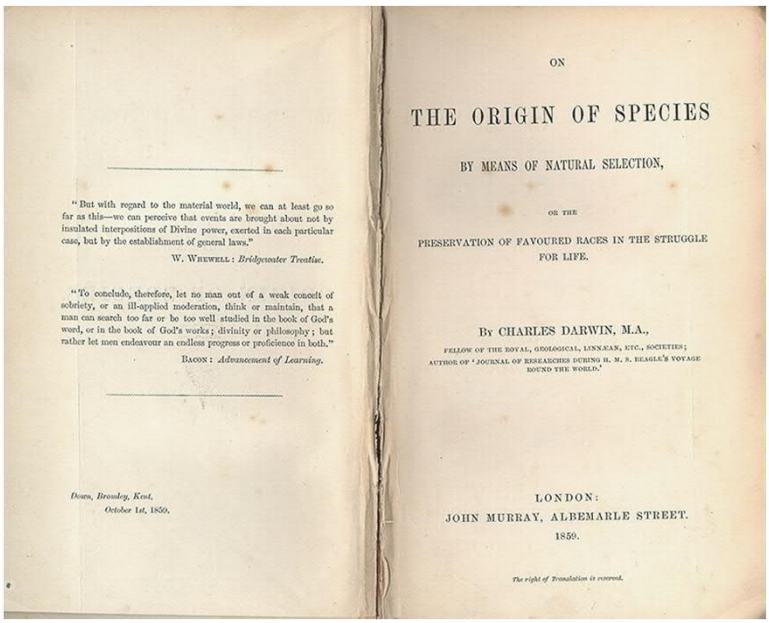


End-of-the-Year Party!
A few words from the MD

MPI-PL - 17th Dec 2024

@profsimonfisher.bsky.social

#1
Seek inspiration



"But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this—we can perceive that events are brought about not by insulated interpositions of Divine power, exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws."

W. Whewell: *Bridgewater Treatise.*

"To conclude, therefore, let no man out of a weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavour an endless progress or proficience in both."

Bacon: *Advancement of Learning.*

Down, Bromley, Kent,
October 1st, 1859.

ON

THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION,

OR THE

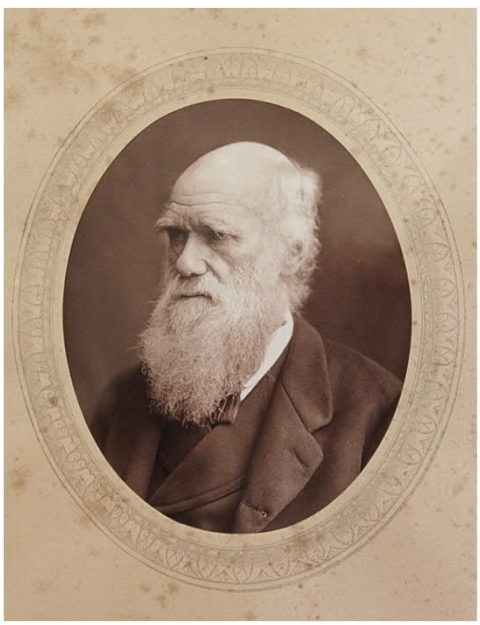
PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

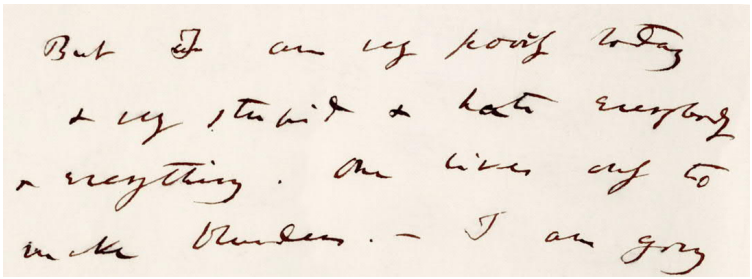
By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL, GEOLOGICAL, LINNEAN, ETC., SOCIETIES;
AUTHOR OF 'JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES DURING H. M. S. BEAGLE'S VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.'

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1859.

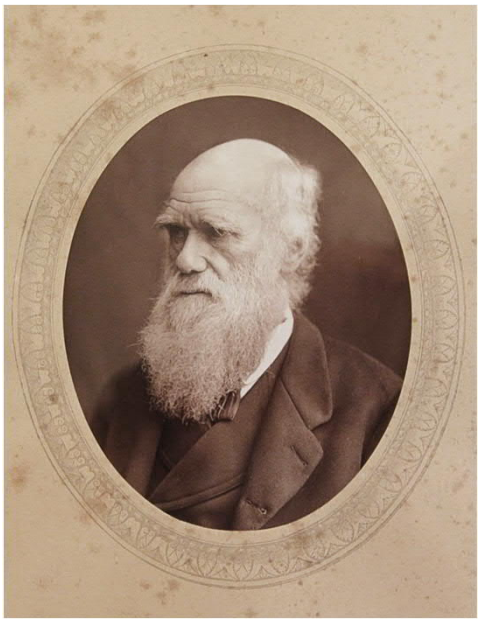
The right of Translation is reserved.





But I am very poorly today
and very stupid and hate
everybody and everything....

Charles Darwin, 1st Oct 1861



#2
Make a list

TO-DO

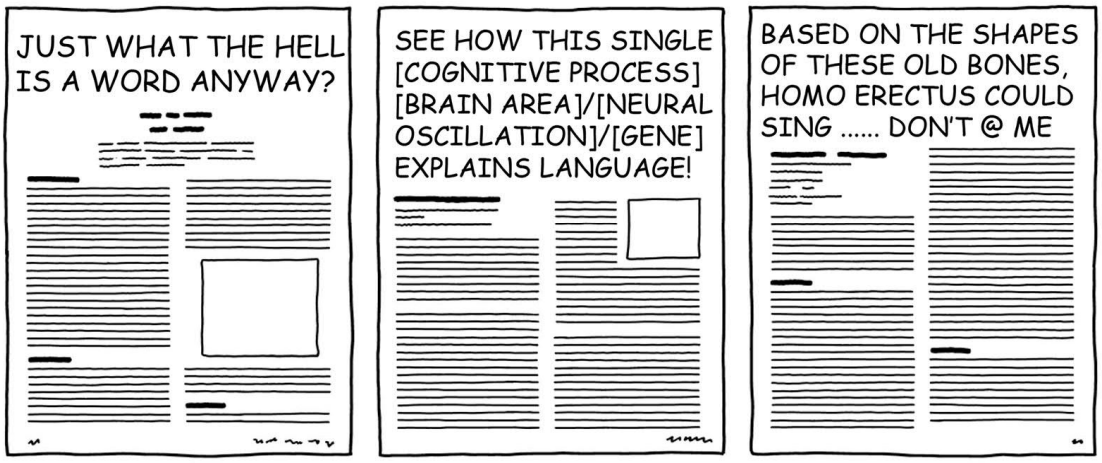
- ☑ Write out to-do list
- ☑ Coffee
- ☑ Open email inbox
- ☑ Close it again in alarm
- ☑ Check to do-list
- ☑ Bluesky.... 🦋

TO-DO

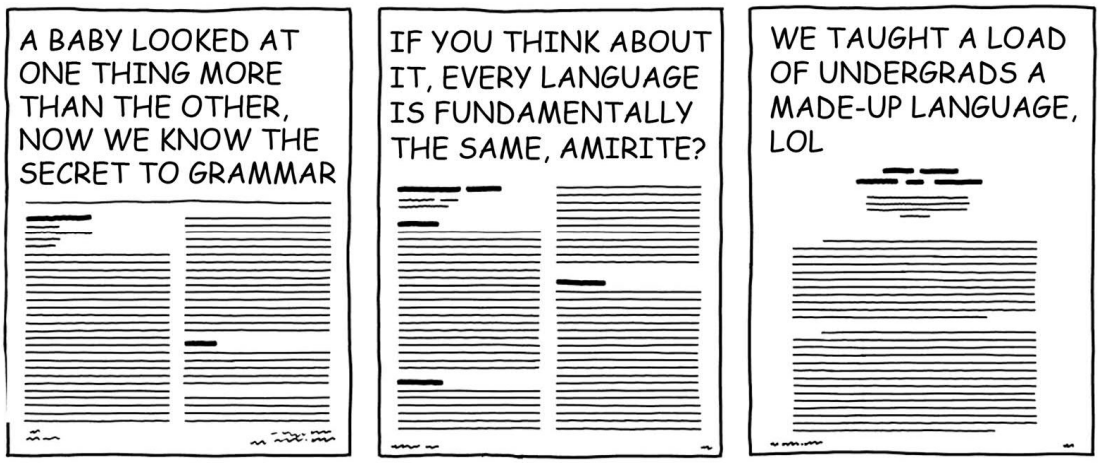
- ☑ Select background music for optimal focus
- ☑ Search web for advice on working effectively
- ☑ Review progress
- ☑ Amusing cat videos
- ☑ More coffee
- ☑ And repeat

#3
Master the literature

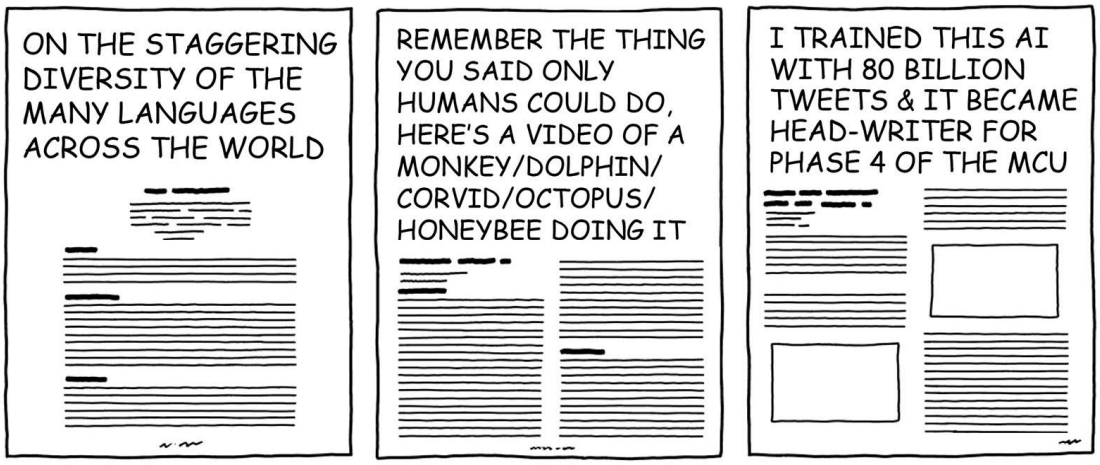
Main types of papers in the language sciences

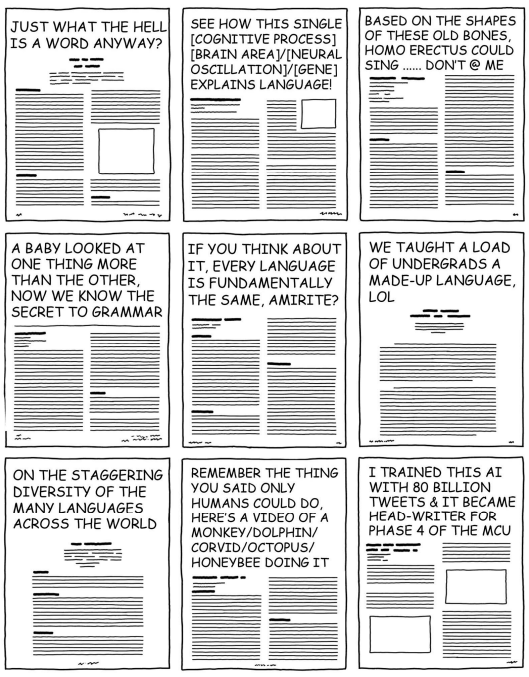


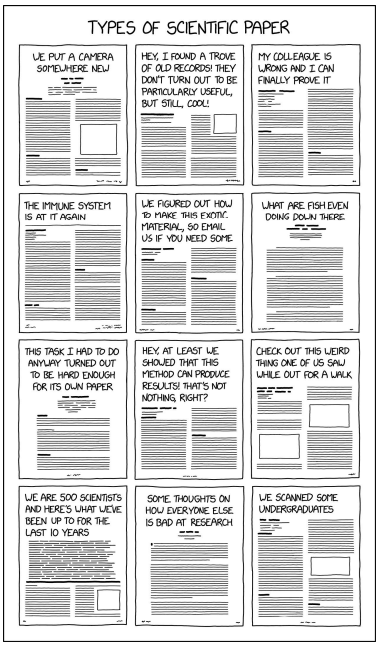
Main types of papers in the language sciences



Main types of papers in the language sciences

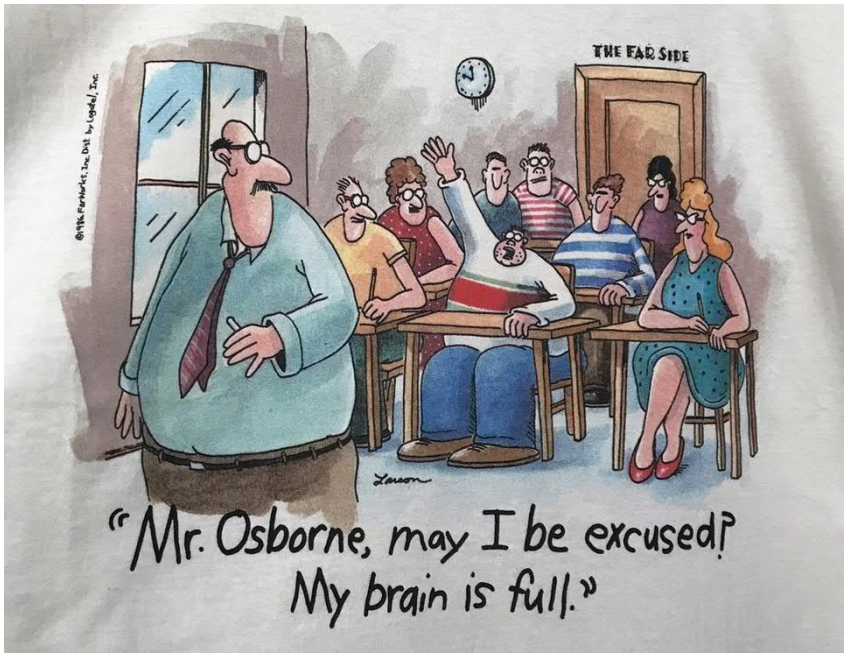






Inspired by https://xkcd.com/2456/

#4
Know your limits

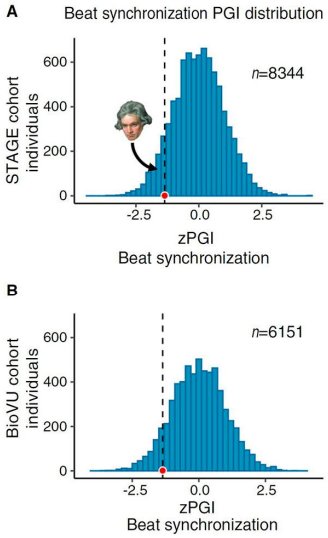


#5
Dare to dream

Notes from Beethoven's genome

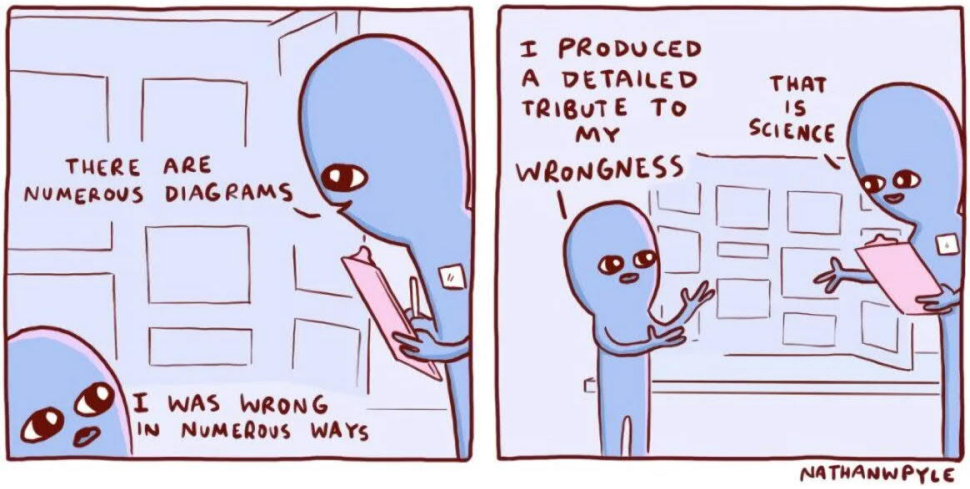
Laura W. Wesseldijk[1,2,3,*], Tara L. Henechowicz[4,5], David J. Baker[6], Giacomo Bignardi[7,8], Robert Karlsson[9], Reyna L. Gordon[10,11,12,13], Miriam A. Mosing[1,3,9,14], Fredrik Ullén[1,3,16], and Simon E. Fisher[7,15,16]

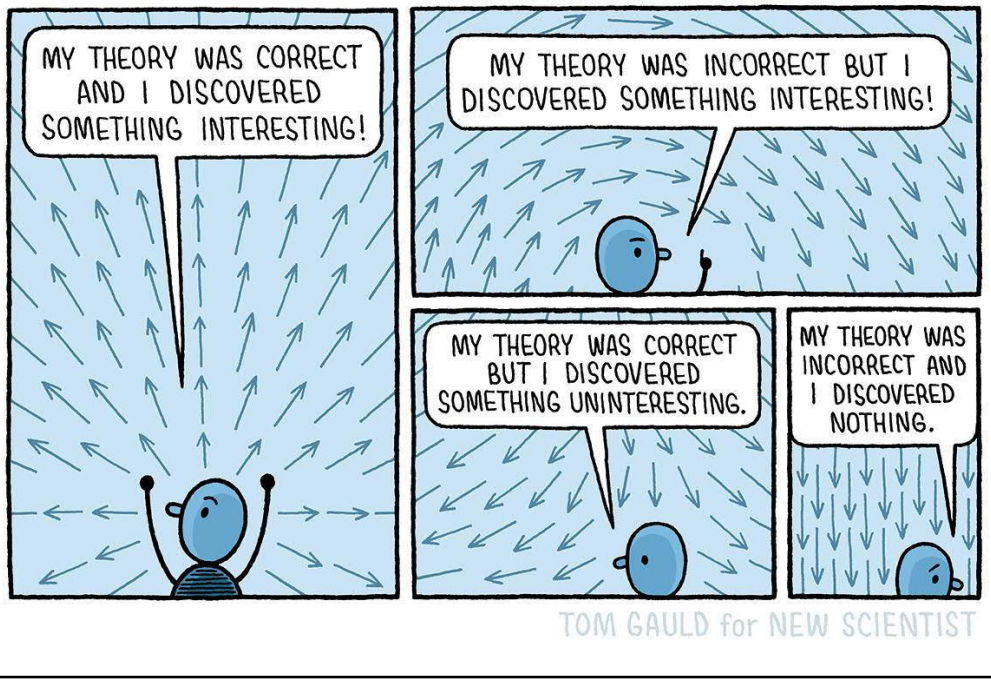
Rapid advances over the last decade in DNA sequencing and statistical genetics enable us to investigate the genomic makeup of individuals throughout history. In a recent notable study, Begg *et al.*[1] used Ludwig van Beethoven's hair strands for genome sequencing and explored genetic predispositions for some of his documented medical issues. Given that it was arguably Beethoven's skills as a musician and composer that made him an iconic figure in Western culture, we here extend the approach and apply it to musicality. We use this as an example to illustrate the broader challenges of individual-level genetic predictions.



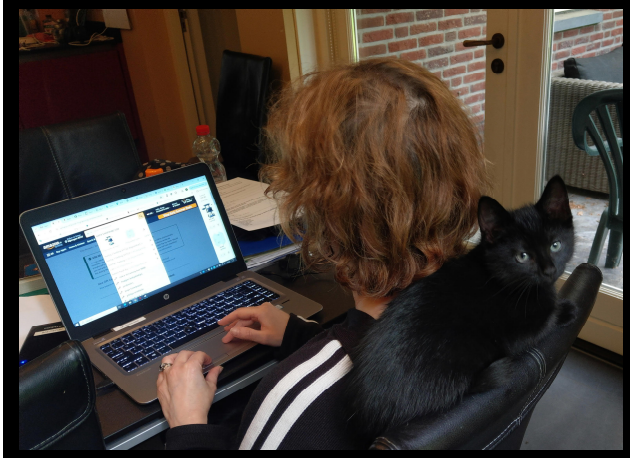
doi: 10.1016/j.cub.2024.01.025
Current Biology, 2024, 34, R233-4

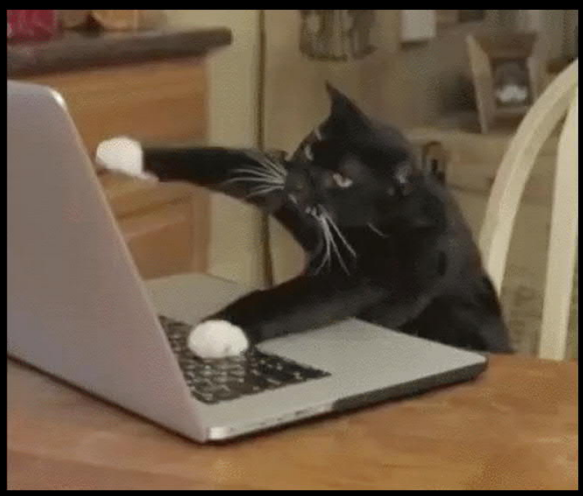
#6
Don’t be afraid to fail


THERE ARE NUMEROUS DIAGRAMS
I WAS WRONG IN NUMEROUS WAYS
I PRODUCED A DETAILED TRIBUTE TO MY WRONGNESS
THAT IS SCIENCE
NATHANWPYLE

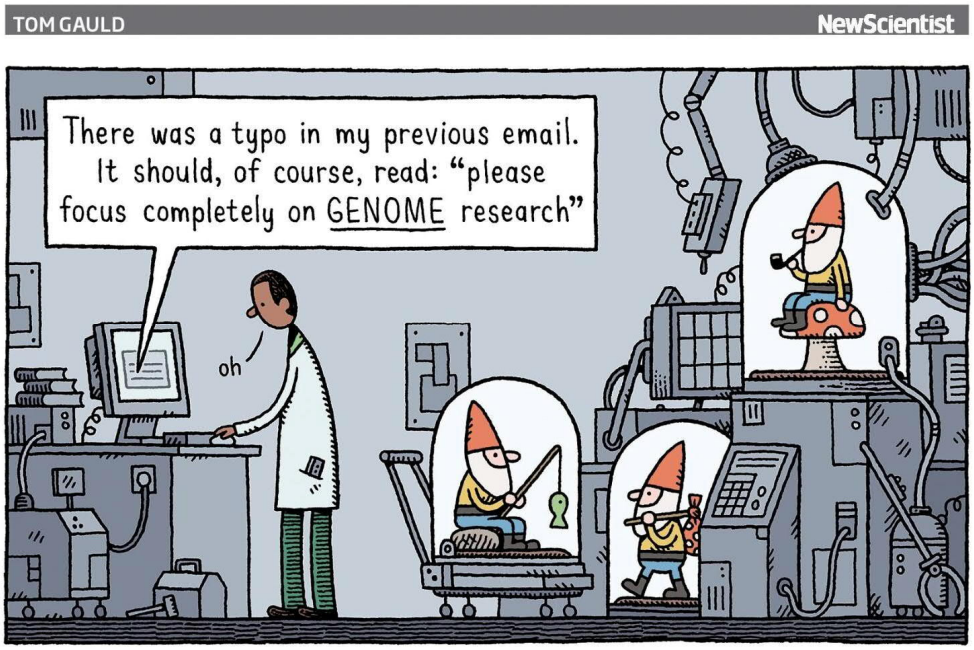

MY THEORY WAS CORRECT AND I DISCOVERED SOMETHING INTERESTING!
MY THEORY WAS INCORRECT BUT I DISCOVERED SOMETHING INTERESTING!
MY THEORY WAS CORRECT BUT I DISCOVERED SOMETHING UNINTERESTING.
MY THEORY WAS INCORRECT AND I DISCOVERED NOTHING.
TOM GAULD for NEW SCIENTIST

#7
Take care of your colleagues & they will take care of you

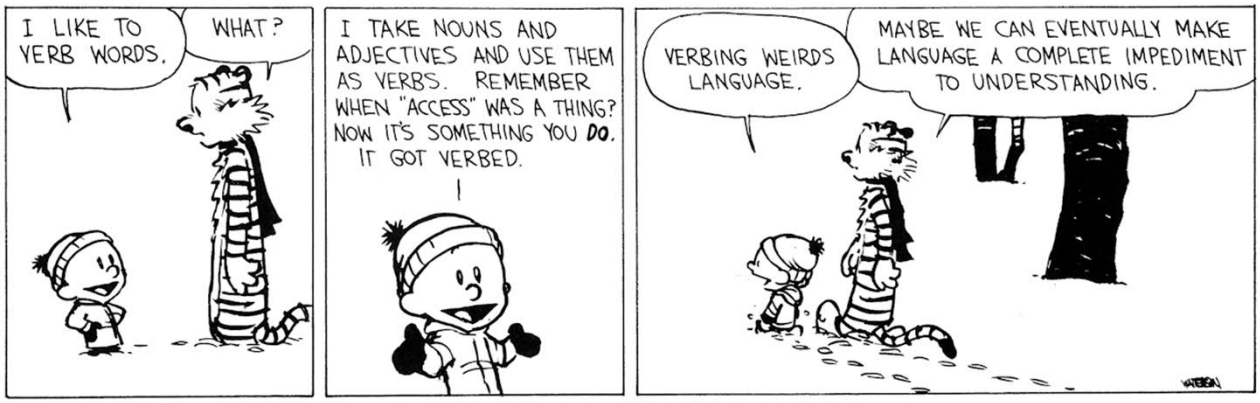




#8
Communicate clearly



Calvin & Hobbes Guide to Linguistics (4th Ed)



#9
Deal with rejection

#9
Reject rejection!

Rejection of rejection letter:

Dear [insert name of editor]

Re: [insert manuscript number and title of ground-breaking study]

Thank you for your rejection of the above manuscript.

Unfortunately we are not able to accept it at this time. As you are probably aware we receive many rejections each year & are simply not able to accept them all. In fact, with increasing pressure on citation rates & fiercely competitive funding structures we typically accept fewer than 30% of the rejections we receive.

Please don't take this as a reflection of your work. The standard of some of the rejections we receive is very high....

In terms of specific factors influencing our decision, the failure by Reviewer 1 to realise the brilliance of the study was certainly one of them. Simply stating "this study is neither novel nor interesting & does not extend knowledge in this area" is not reason enough.

This, coupled with the use of Latin quotes by Reviewer 2, rendered an acceptance of your rejection extremely unlikely.

We do wish you and your editorial team every success with your rejections in the future & hope they find safe harbour elsewhere. To this end, may we suggest you send one to [insert name of rival research group] for consideration. They accept rejections from some very influential journals....

...

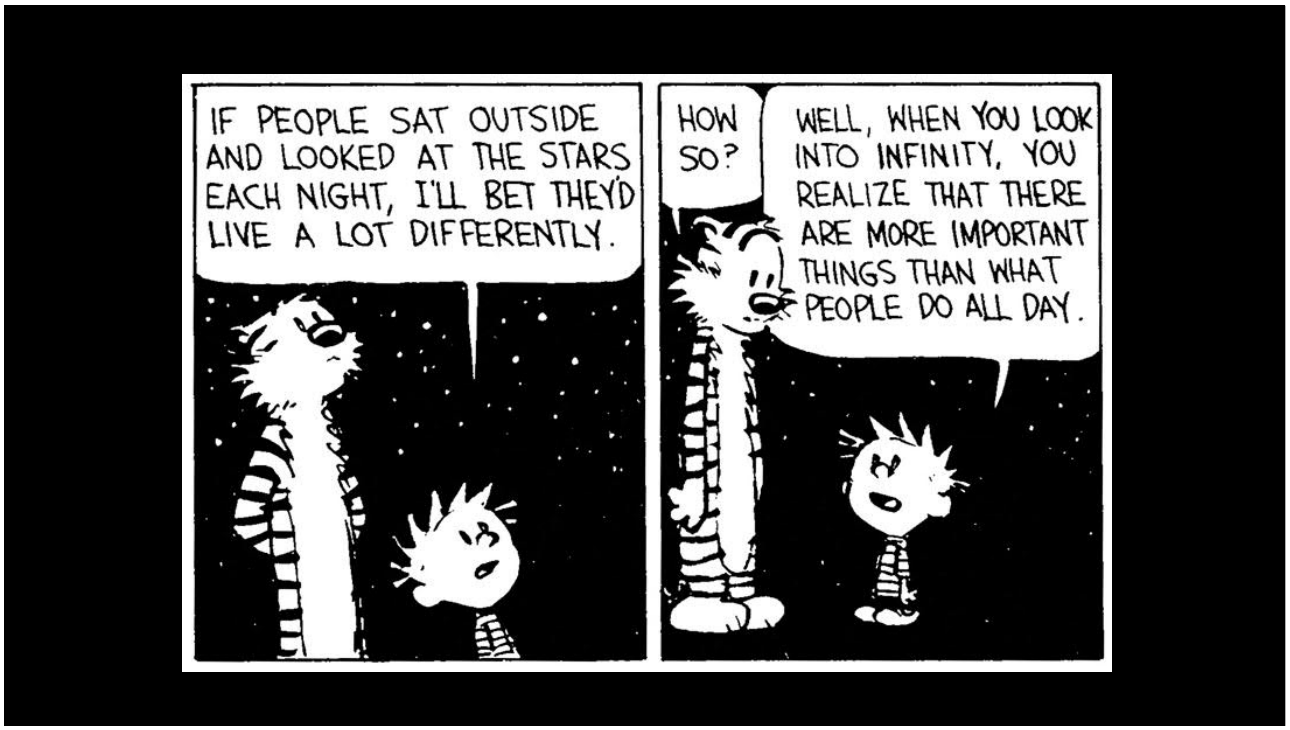
Please understand that our decision regarding your rejection is final. We have uploaded the final manuscript in its original form, along with the signed copyright transfer form. We look forward to receiving the proofs and to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

[insert your name here]

Source = Rejection of rejection: a novel approach to overcoming barriers to publication. Chapman C, Slade T. British Medical Journal, 2015, 351, h6326. doi: 10.1136/bmj.h6326.

#10
Remember the big picture


IF PEOPLE SAT OUTSIDE AND LOOKED AT THE STARS EACH NIGHT, I'LL BET THEY'D LIVE A LOT DIFFERENTLY.
HOW SO?
WELL, WHEN YOU LOOK INTO INFINITY, YOU REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS THAN WHAT PEOPLE DO ALL DAY.

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

WWW.MPI.NL