

What is an EPL Perspective?

An EPL Perspective provides a **brief, accessible point-of-view** on research at the **frontiers of physics**. In more detail:

Brief – All articles in EPL, Letters and Perspectives, are limited to a maximum of seven pages all in – so that includes the title, abstract, references and everything else. This is enough space to develop a scientific argument that supports a single, central claim, but not much more. The key is to identify that one central claim at the outset, include the minimum amount of evidence to support it, and ruthlessly exclude everything else. If authors find themselves running out of space, it is generally better to cut entire paragraphs rather than condense a quart of information into a pint pot.

Accessible – EPL enjoys a broad audience spanning the breadth of physics research, including topics at the interfaces with other natural sciences as well as the social sciences. Any reader should at least be able to grasp the central claim and gain an appreciation of its importance, even if they must necessarily skip over technical details. This is especially true of a Perspective, which might be read by people who have had no exposure to your chosen topic, beyond what might be dimly remembered from undergraduate lectures. Pay particular attention to the abstract, introduction and conclusion. Imagine that you are about to enter the field from a completely different branch of physics: write what you would want to read to get you up to speed on the topic and able to work on it straight away.

Point-of-view – The brevity and accessibility requirements imply that a Perspective cannot be comprehensive and will therefore be skewed – most likely to the authors' own work. This is absolutely fine, and indeed we encourage provocation and speculation to the degree that is supported by scientific evidence. Tell readers about the arguments being rehearsed at conferences and lab meetings: the messy data that don't quite make sense, or the questions left unanswered by theory. Let readers know what is unique to the approach taken by the authors and their collaborators and why it shows unusual promise. Of course, contrary opinions and approaches should be appropriately acknowledged and cited – but we are not looking for the kind of even-handed and comprehensive review that fills several hundred pages, despite the pivotal role these play in physics research. Instead, think more along the lines of a keynote talk at a major conference. A slightly less formal than usual writing style may also suit some authors.

Frontiers of physics – A Perspective should be forward looking, emphasising where a field is going rather than where it has come from. Consider again a scientist considering entering the field from the outside. Will the article inspire them to take the plunge? Will they know what the burning questions are that need to be answered, which papers to read to understand the state of the art, and have a sense of how to get started? If so, the article they have just read is a Perspective.

Authors may feel daunted by the above. Don't be! Focus on the problem that's most vexing right now, write out what it is and why it's so important that it gets solved. That will probably get you about two-thirds of the way there. The Editors are on hand to give advice during the writing process, and we are keen to promote the most exciting articles as widely as we can. Take the opportunity to unleash your creativity!

Richard Blythe, EPL Editor-in-Chief, July 2024