

## Re: Is this acceptable Chemical English?

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.chem/2005-02/1455.html>

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**From:** Bob ([bbx107\\_at\\_excite.com](mailto:bbx107_at_excite.com))

**Date:** 02/28/05

Date: Sun, 27 Feb 2005 19:46:11 -0800

On 26 Feb 2005 07:25:50 -0800, farooq\_w@hotmail.com wrote:

>  
>Bob wrote:  
>  
>> >"Weigh 0.1 g of extra pure X to the nearest 0.1 mg, transfer to a  
>500  
>> >ml volumetric flask(...). Take the absorbance readings..."  
>> >is usually transformed as  
>> >  
>> >"Weighed 0.1675 g X, transferred and dissolved in distilled water  
>and  
>> >\_maked up\_ the volume. Took absorbance of this solution.  
>>  
>> >Other than the incorrect irregular verb form, that is not so bad.  
>  
>>So you suggest that starting a sentence like "Weighed 1.234 g of X and  
>transferred to a 500 ml volumetric flask" is grammatically correct.  
>Maked up is certainly wrong.

The past tense of make is made. Using "made up" is ok, though probably not my first choice.

Note that what you wrote in " " does not have a subject, so is not quite a sentence. Whether it is ok in a lab report is up to you.

>  
>  
>>  
>> >I think the earlier one is somewhat easier to follow. Not a big deal.  
>>  
>> >Yes, transferred should be transferring, etc. The main verb is  
>> prepared; weighing, transferring, dissolving all go with by.  
>>  
>>  
>> >But how about... I weighed a 0.1675 g sample of ...  
>  
>>I read somewhere that in scientific writing usage of "I" is severely

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*>frowned upon but people like Newton have used "I" in his writings. Most  
>of the journals would not allow this usage.*

I think the pendulum is swinging on that point.

I checked at random a few articles, from US labs, in current J Bacteriology. Some use first person, some do not.

(Of course, first person might be I or we, depending on whether there is one author or more. That's not the point here, which deals with active vs passive voice. In ordinary writing, we are usually urged to minimize passive voice. So why are we encouraged to use it for scientific writing? I guess, to depersonalize the science. But active voice is often simpler, both to write and read. If there are journals or editors that do not accept it, maybe, but I suspect it is much less an issue than it used to be.)

Someone suggested that you should use formal reports, so they are ready for publication. I don't really agree. You have a certain amount of your students' time. You get to make a judgment how much of this you want to spend on discussing and doing the work, and how much on presentation. I do agree that it is good to teach them how to do formal reports, particularly since you are dealing with more advanced students who are likely to work in the industry. But it is still reasonable to ask that some reports be formal, and some be quicker.

Also note the difference in how a procedure would be described in a Methods section of a paper vs a procedures manual. In the latter, a bulleted list is common. Individual steps need not be shown as complete sentences. This format is very clear and easy to read. It is not used in papers, but might be suitable for student lab reports.

bob