Writing for Computer Science

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Writing for Computer Science is an introduction to doing and describing - search. For the most part the book is a discussion of good writing style and effective research strategies. Some of the material is accepted wisdom, some is controversial, and some is my opinions. Although the book is brief, it is designed to be comprehensive: some readers may be interested in exploring topics further, but for most readers this book should be suf?cient. The ?rst edition of this book was almost entirely about writing. This e- tion, partly in response to reader feedback and partly in response to issues that arose in my ownexperiences as an advisor, researcher, and referee, is also about research methods. Indeed, the two topics writing about and doing research are not clearly separated. It is a small step from asking how do I write? to askingwhatisitthatIwriteabout? As previously, the guidance on writing focuses on research, but much of the material is applicable to general technical and professional communication. Likewise, the guidance on the practice of research has broader lessons. A pr- titioner trying a new algorithm or explaining to colleagues why one solution is preferable to another should be con?dent that the arguments are built on robust foundations. And, while this edition has a stronger emphasis on research than did the ?rst, nothing has been deleted; there is additional material on research, but the guidance on writing has not been taken away."

Writing for Computer Science Details

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Stanislav Vorobyev says

An amazingly comprehensive overview on how to describe and present your research, must-read for a novice computer scientist.

Thore Husfeldt says

Bravo. This book is comprehensive, clear, useful, concrete, non-trivial, non-dogmatic, and competent. Stellar advice for students and researchers alike. Very useful for an introductory class for academic writing, or to hit thesis students (and colleagues) over the head with.

Johnny Graber says

Zobel explains in much detail what it takes to write for a scientific publication. Even when you don't want to write a technical paper, the ideas and examples can help you to write more precise and to the point.

Max Lybbert says

I had expected a book on writing user manuals, developer documentation, or similar documents. Instead, this book focuses on writing ACM-style articles and conference papers. There is material about doing research and refereeing papers as well. I was very happy with the book, and would recommend it to anybody.

Rod Hilton says

Indispensable.

As a Computer Science PhD candidate, I was absolutely shocked to see a book like this even exists - it seems so specific, but writing in the Computer Science field is often terrible, and Justin Zobel's book painlessly dissects what makes CS papers so bad, and how to avoid those problems.

The book covers everything, ranging from how to conduct research to how to perform experiments, and, of course, how to actually write the paper. No stone is left unturned, Zobel doles out advice for grammar as well as figure and table design, software to use, bibliographies, and how to best structure a paper to effectively communicate ideas. He even includes sections on ethics, giving presentations, and refereeing papers.

Most of the book consists of an explanation of how to write effectively in Computer Science, followed by

one or more examples of how to fail in that specific way, followed by an example of how to succeed. These comparisons make it very easy to understand Zobel's points, so the book is very easy to digest and understand.

If you're in Computer Science, and you're writing papers with the goal of publishing, this is an absolute must-read, end of story.

The only bad thing I can say about this book is, now that I know what kind of mistakes to avoid in CS writing, I see them everywhere. Clearly, more people need to read this book.

Domenico says

Really useful!

Jonathan Schuster says

Great overview of not just how to write about computer science research, but also how to do research itself. I wish I had read this book when I first started my PhD so that I had a better view of the overall process.

Szymon says

This is a great manual not only on academic writing, but also on refereeing, giving presentations, and doing ethical research. Its packed full of great, actionable advice so even though I'm tagging it #read, it's not leaving my work desk anytime soon. Highly recommended!

David Tedjopurnomo says

Zobel provided a lot of excellent tips and surprising insights into the world of science writing. I recommend going through the book and noting common writing mistakes you have been making or will potentially make in the future.