



ROUND TABLE

Some scientific writing traps

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It was with a sigh of relief that I read the articles in the May 1993 issue of *TLE on ways* and means to improve scientific writing. I'm relieved to discover I'm not the only one who has (on numerous occasions) struggled through a difficult paper only to painstakingly discover that it dealt with a simple concept that had just been "written difficult." I particularly liked Gregory Bryan's suggestion that writers should get right to the point and keep it short.

It is my belief that most scientists are capable of communicating effectively. The problem is not necessarily rooted in

The Thick Report Syndrome. No scientist likes to sum up a year's work in a few sentences. This is particularly true if the results were not earth-shaking. (Although a lot of geophysics is by its very nature "earthshaking.") Another contributing factor is the money factor;