

Preliminary Data and Progress Reports



David R. Jones, MD
University of Virginia
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Preliminary Data

What the NIH tells you

- “Use this section to provide an account of the PI’s preliminary studies pertinent to this application...”
- “This information will also help to establish the experience and competence of the investigator to pursue the proposed project.”
- “Peer review committees generally view preliminary data as an essential part of a research grant application.”
- “Preliminary data often aid the reviewers in assessing the likelihood of the success of the proposed project.”

Preliminary Data

What the NIH tells you

- **Length of this section is 6-8 pages maximum**
- **There are Font and page margin specifications**
- **“Use English and avoid jargon”**
- **Spell out non-universal terms and then abbreviate them**

Preliminary Data

What the NIH doesn't tell you

- The foundation for the entire proposal
- “Sets the stage” for your experimental design section
- Establishes the level of science for the entire proposal
- The link between your specific aims and your proposed experiments
- The first demonstration to the reviewers of what you think (hypothesis), how you think (critical experiments), and the depth of your thinking (alternatives)
- Opportunity to generate excitement or buzz (or rain) about your ideas



Beware of slippery hybrid salesmen.

This is a sales job and you are the salesperson.

Preliminary Data

How to Get Started

- This is the **FIRST** section I write (after Specific Aims).
- Gather all your data
- Begin to fit the data into panels (i.e. Fig 1A, 1B, etc.)
– a dynamic process!
- Discard data that you do not need or that is unclear
- Write 6-8 key statements that are one sentence each that summarize each panel of figures

Preliminary Data

How to Get Started

- **The data need to support the proposed experiments in the subaims**
- **You need to “lead” and educate (when necessary) the reviewer**
- **Preliminary data should tell an orderly, logical story**
- **Should be presented in the context of what is already known about “X” (i.e. key references)**
- **Address potential controversial issues with experiments, not opinions**

Preliminary Data

How to Get Started

- **Know the literature**
- **Focus on the critical experiment(s)**
- **Why start early on this section?**
 - **you will find holes in your data that need fixed**
 - **experiments take time**
 - **formatting data takes considerable time**
 - **some data will need repeated because the quality will be inadequate**

Preliminary Data

Writing the Text

- **Present the problem or the unknown**
- **State your hypothesis!**
- **Explain how you initially experimentally addressed it**
- **Explain, if necessary, why you chose this experimental approach, assay, etc.**
- **Discuss alternatives and how you experimentally addressed them**
- **Place your findings in the context of others**
- **End the paragraph with “positivity”.**

Preliminary Data

Things to Not Do

- **Do not put all your data into preliminary data section**
- **Do not present data that is not compelling**
- **Do not present poor quality figures, photos, diagrams, etc.**
- **Do not insert too many figures (more is not always better)**
- **Do not overstate your results (i.e. “These results suggest that we have identified the gene responsible for dying.”)**

Preliminary Data

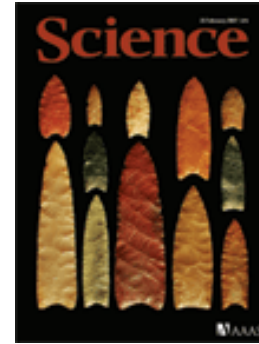
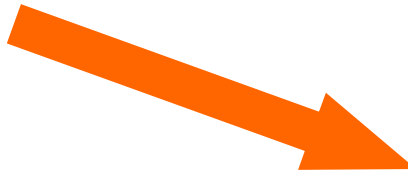
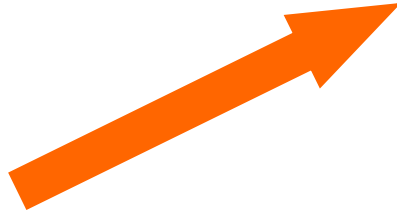
Things to Absolutely Do

- **Emphasize** what is novel about your findings
- **Include** controls on your experiments
- **Inclusion** of important “negative” experiments may be helpful
- **Include** color pictures or other data of high quality/clarity
- **Underline** for the reviewer the key points for each section
- **Link** your preliminary data to the experiments in the experimental design
- **Tell** them what you did **and why**.

Preliminary Data

Things to Absolutely Do

- **Figure legends must be self explanatory**
- **Consider a final schematic model or cartoon to summarize your major point(s)**
- **Demonstrate to the reviewers that you can do the assays, have the model, etc.**
- **Repeat important points**
- **Tell them more of what it is in contrast to what it isn't.**
- **Present “publication-quality” data**
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE**



START WORKING.