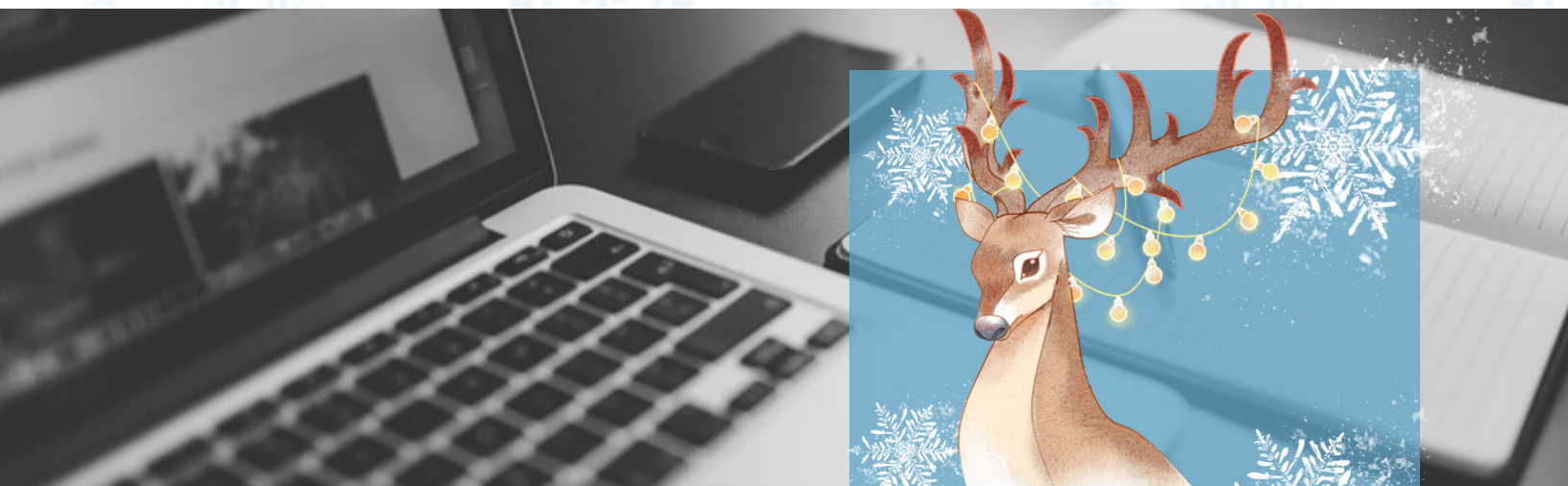




Maintaining and promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences



## From the President

Happy New Year! I'm Steve Palmer, and I am proud to be your BELS President for 2024-2025. I've been a member of BELS since 2004, and since then I've been happy to watch the organization grow, both in membership and in the breadth of its activities. I would like to thank Melanie Ross, MSJ, ELS, now our Immediate Past President, for providing me with such a good role model in the year I spent as President-Elect.

The past year has been an eventful one for BELS members. Here are some of the highlights:

- We had a series of educational webinars

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- Monthly Poll Results

### *The BELS Letter*

Urvika Pawar, ELS  
Managing Editor

Alex Rudie  
Publications Coordinator

# From the President

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(recordings of which can be found on the [BELS website](#)) and online social events.

- We introduced Emeritus membership for members of or nearing retirement age.
- We introduced the new certification maintenance program. Tom Gegeny, MS, ELS, Chair of the Certification Maintenance Committee, explained the program in detail in the [August issue](#) of *The BELS Letter*. Then, in December, he hosted an online town hall to answer questions about the program.
- We formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force of enthusiastic volunteers. The task force is preparing a survey to assess the DEI needs of our members.
- At the 2023 American Medical Writers Association meeting in Baltimore, we held a BELS breakfast—the first since 2019.
- In December, we held our annual membership meeting online. Many thanks to all who attended!

Also, please join me in welcoming our new managing editor for *The BELS Letter*, Urvika Pawar, ELS. Also, I'd like to thank Bryan Tutt, ELS(D), for his service as managing editor for the past two years.

Speaking of people stepping up, we need volunteers for our BELS committees, including Certification Exam Development, Professional Development, Membership, and Marketing. If you would like to volunteer, please visit our website and complete the [volunteer interest form](#).

I hope you all have a rewarding 2024 ahead!

Steve Palmer, PhD, ELS  
BELS President

## Be There With BELS On!

Proudly display the BELS logo on your tote bag, mug, travel tumbler, sweatshirt, laptop case, or mouse pad. BELS merchandise items make great gifts for colleagues, employees, friends, family, and yourself! You can also ship directly to the recipient. Visit [www.bels.org/store](http://www.bels.org/store) to order.



# New Year, New Beginnings

By: Urvika Pawar, ELS

Wishing all readers a very happy new year! I hope 2024 brings you tremendous joy and growth in personal and professional spheres alike. Speaking of professional growth, here is a gentle reminder to all certified editors – both ELS and ELS(D) – that the Certification Maintenance program is now live. Please ensure that you have taken note of the information provided at the links below.

1. For an overview about the program, please visit [Certification Maintenance](#).
2. For frequently asked questions, please visit [Certification Maintenance FAQ](#).
3. For examples of various ways certified editors can earn credits, please visit [Case Scenarios](#).
4. For suggested education sources, please visit [Learning Resources](#).
5. For an in-depth look at how to use the Credit Tracker tool, please visit the [Certification Maintenance Credit Tracker](#).
6. To access the Certification Maintenance Town Hall Recording, please visit [2023 BELS Certification Maintenance: Panel Discussion and Q&A Town Hall](#).

Feel free to reach out if you have any queries; we are committed to making this process as seamless as possible.

## BELS Member Discounts

BELS has partnered with resource providers to offer valuable members-only discounts on products and services that help make your job easier. These offers are exclusive to BELS members and should not be shared with any non-member.

BELS member discounts include a **30% discount** on a single license of PerfectIt software. PerfectIt improves consistency, ensures quality, and saves time. BELS members also receive a **20% discount** on reference books such as *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The discount can be applied to both online and print versions of these books. Visit [bels.org](https://bels.org) and click on Member Resources to claim your discounts today!



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# Monthly Poll Results

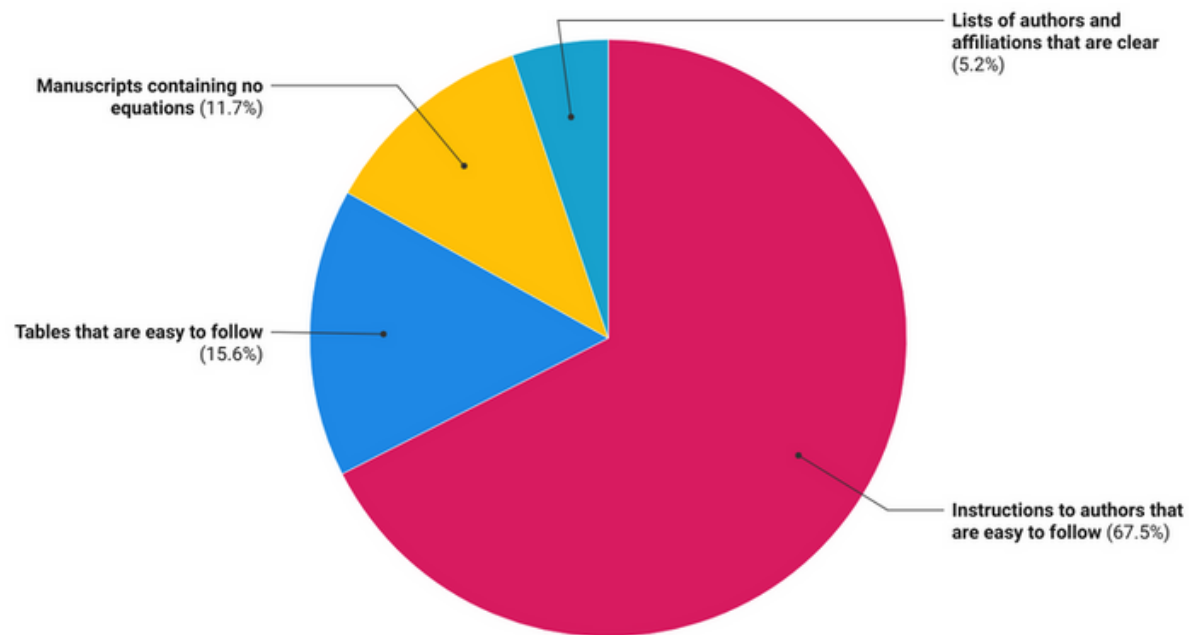
In December's monthly poll, we asked you to tell us what feature of a manuscript that you, as an editor, are most thankful for. Most (67.5%) of you voted for "Instructions to authors that are easy to follow"; "Tables that are easy to follow" was a distant second (15.6%).

Respondents were less likely to be most thankful for manuscripts containing no equations and for lists of authors and affiliations that are clear. Equations and unclear lists of authors and affiliations are not as problematic as (perhaps because they are less common than) hard-to-follow instructions or tables. Therefore, most editors are more thankful for easy-to-follow instructions and tables.

Visit [bels.org](https://bels.org) to participate in this month's poll, which asks you to select activities that you would undertake in 2024 to improve your value as an editor.

## Which of these are you as an editor most thankful for?

December 2023 BELS Poll Results



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## New in 2024

The BELS Code of Ethics has been updated! Make sure to refresh your memory and take a look at the new sections of the [BELS Code of Ethics](#). For more resources, make sure to check out the [Member Resources section](#).



## Officers

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Chair, Nominations & Elections

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The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. The need for an objective test of editorial skill has long been recognized.

To meet that need, BELS developed a process for testing and evaluating proficiency in editing in the life sciences. The Board administers two examinations—one for certification and one for diplomate status. The examinations, written by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.

