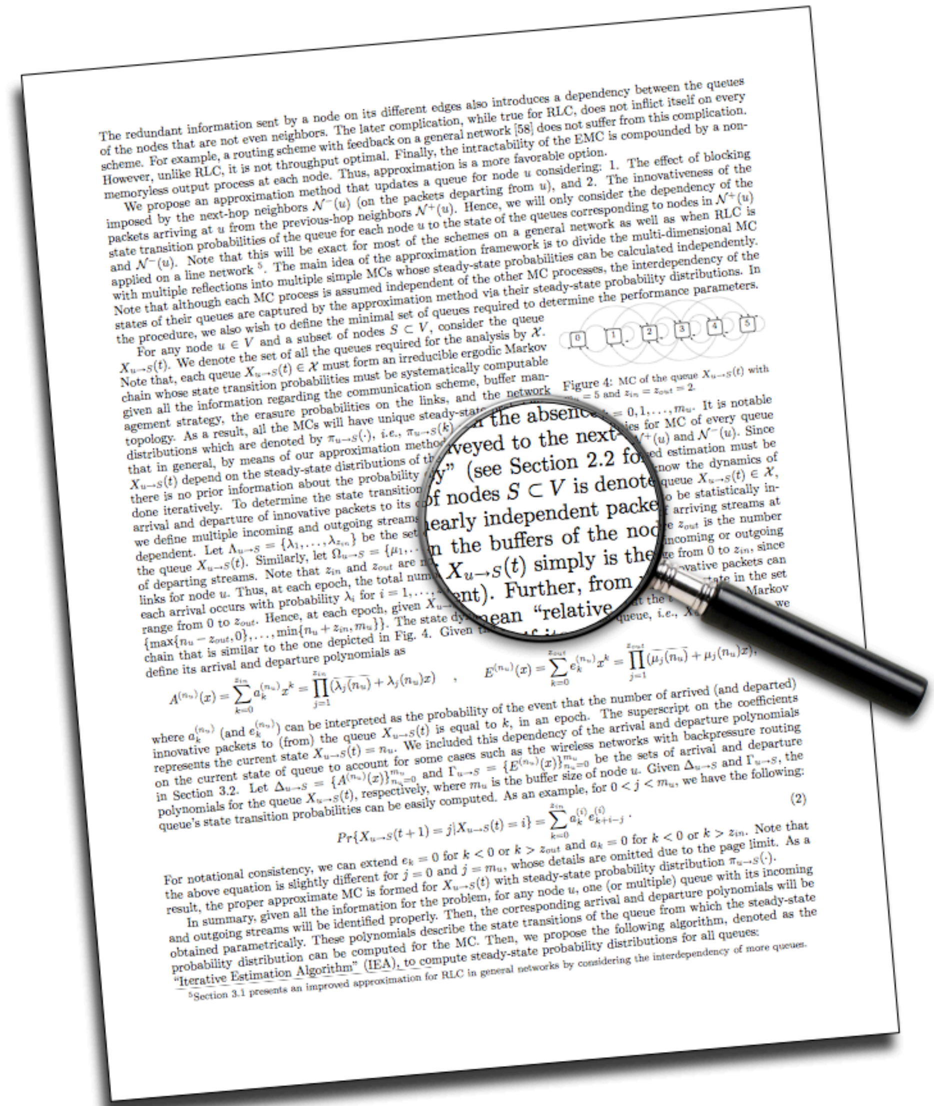
Top Ten Mistakes to Avoid in Writing CAREER Proposals

CISE Mixed Advisory Taskforce on Technology, Education, Research and Science (CISE MATTERS)

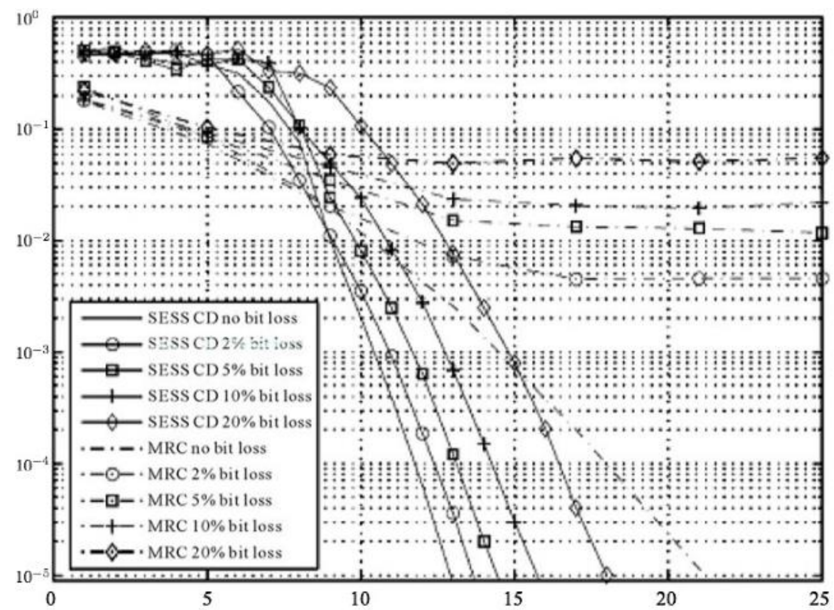
Number 10: Fonts Too Small

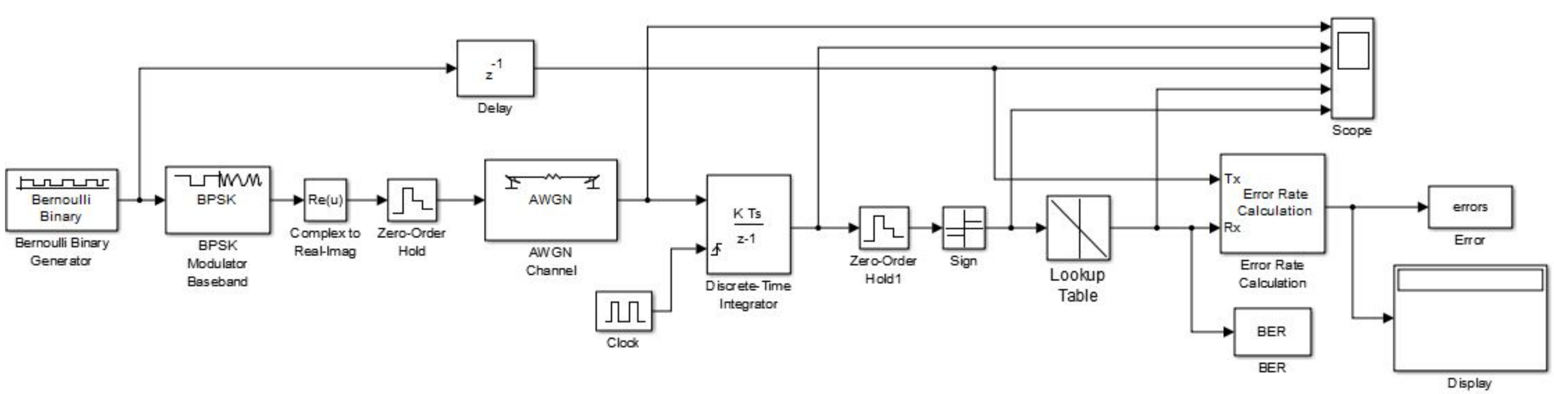
- Small fonts promote reader fatigue
- Reviewers HATE small fonts
- GPG mandates:
  - 11 point font minimum
  - 1 inch margins
  - 6 lines max per vertical inch



Number 9: Figures Illegible

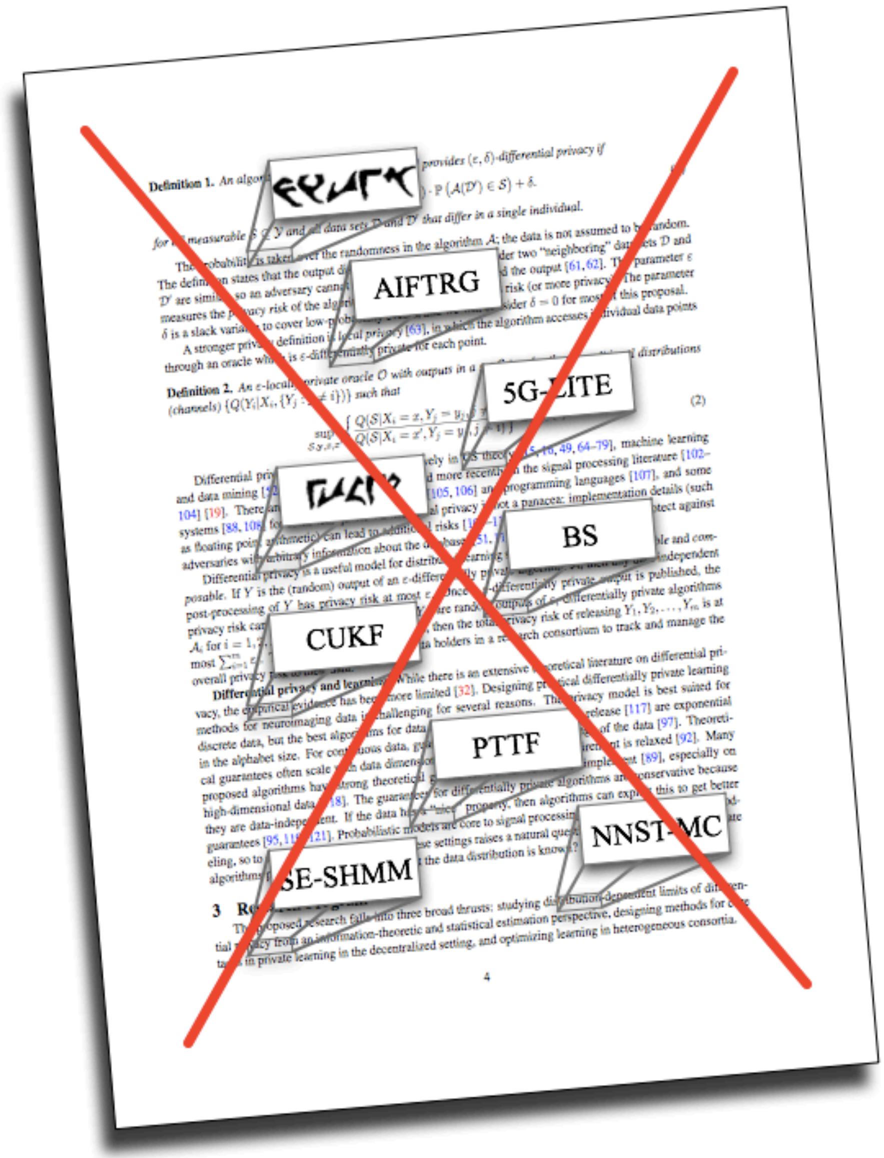
- Avoid “crowded” visuals
- Don’t assume reader will print in color
- Use vector graphic formats





Number 8: Acronyms & Abbreviations

- Acronyms are **UGLY**, and make text hard to read.
- Acronyms limit your audience to those who already know them…



Number 7: Dissing the Competition

- Good idea: Citing others' work
- Bad idea: Slighting others' work

("Others" might be sitting on the panel)

Number 6: Poor distinction between preliminary results and proposed work

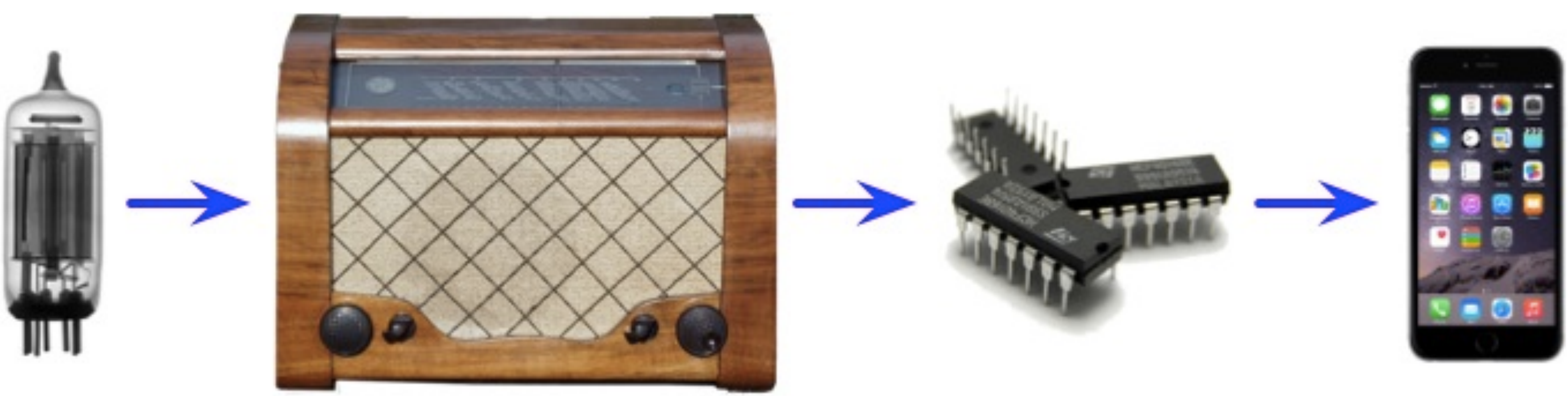
- Make a clear demarcation
- Distinguish your results from others’
- Provide clear road map for future work

Number 5: Lackluster Education Plan

- Should be integrated with research plan
- Think **beyond** your present teaching duties

Number 4: Dull Broader Impacts

- Broader Impacts ask:
  - How will this work change society?
- Don't confuse this with "extracurricular activities" not supported by the research plan
- Outreach plans should be actionable



Number 3:
Confining yourself to your PhD work

- CAREER proposal should be forward-looking
- Move above and beyond your PhD work
- "Imagine a world …"

(yes)

(no)

Number 2: “It wasn’t clear …”

Symptoms:

- Long-winded explanations
- Too many superfluous details
- Poor organization of thoughts into words

Remedies:

- Use fewer words
- Read first two pages aloud
- “Make every word tell”

Number 1: Research Plan lacking Cohesion

- Don’t staple together unrelated ideas

- Don’t offer a laundry list with no prioritization
- Don’t make everything look like a nail to your one hammer

- Tell a story with your narrative

Questions?