This guide outlines key points for preparing primary research manuscripts for submission to Nature Communications.

The corresponding author should be familiar with the Nature journals' editorial policies and is solely responsible for communicating with the journal and managing communication between coauthors. Before submission, the corresponding author ensures that all authors are included in the author list and agree with its order, and that they are aware the manuscript is to be submitted. For more information on editorial and authorship policies please review our Guide to Authors.

Cover letter
Although optional, the cover letter is an excellent opportunity to briefly discuss the context and importance of the submitted work and why it is appropriate for the journal. Please avoid repeating information that is already present in the abstract and introduction. The cover letter is not shared with the referees, and should be used to provide confidential information, such as conflicts of interest, and to declare any related work that is in press or submitted elsewhere.

Main manuscript
The Nature journals are flexible with regard to the format of initial submissions. Within reason, style and length will not influence consideration of a manuscript. If revisions are requested, the editor will provide detailed formatting instructions at that time. For information on length and formatting consult Nature Communications' content types.

Title. If possible, this should be 15 words or fewer and should not contain technical terms, abbreviations, punctuation and active verbs.

Abstract. Provide a general introduction to the topic and a brief non-technical summary of your main results and their implication.

Text length and formatting. Attention to the following details can help expedite publication if we invite a revision after external review.

- Articles: an abstract of approximately 150 words, un referenced; main text of no more than 5,000 words and 10 display items (figures, tables). As a guideline, Articles allow up to 70 references. Section headings should be used and subheadings may appear in ‘Results’. Avoid ‘Introduction’ as a heading.

Methods. The Methods section appears in all online original research articles and should contain all elements necessary for interpretation and replication of the results. Methods should be written as concisely as possible and typically do not exceed 3,000 words but may be longer if necessary. We encourage you to deposit any step-by-step protocols used in your study in Protocol Exchange, an open resource maintained by NPG. These protocols are linked to the Methods section upon publication.

References. These may only contain citations and should list only one publication with each number. Include the title of the cited article or dataset.

Acknowledgements (optional). Keep acknowledgements brief and do not include thanks to anonymous referees or editors, or effusive comments. Grant or contribution numbers may be acknowledged.

Author contributions. You must include a statement that specifies the individual contributions of each co-author. For example: "A.P.M. ‘contributed’ Y and Z; B.T.R. ‘contributed’ Y,” etc. See our authorship policies for more details.

Competing interests. Submission of a competing interests statement is required for all content of the journal.

Materials & Correspondence. Indicate the author(s) to whom correspondence and material requests should be addressed.

Tables. Each table should be submitted as a word document and accompanied by a short title sentence describing what the table shows. Further details can be included as footnotes to the table.

Figures
High-resolution image files are not required at initial submission, but please ensure that images are of sufficient resolution for referees to properly assess the data.

Should your manuscript be accepted, you will receive more extensive instructions for final submission of display items. However, some guidelines for final figure preparation are included below and here if you wish to minimize later revisions and possible delays.

- Provide images in RGB color and at 300 dpi or higher resolution.
- Use the same typeface (Arial or Helvetica) for all figures. Use symbol font for Greek letters.
- Use distinct colors with comparable visibility and avoid the use of red and green for contrast. Recoloring primary data, such as fluorescence images, to color-safe combinations such as green and magenta or other accessible color palettes is strongly encouraged. Use of the rainbow color scale should be avoided.
- Figures are best prepared at the size you would expect them to appear in print. At this size, the optimum font size is between 5pt and 8pt.
- We prefer vector files with editable layers. Acceptable formats are: .ai, .eps, .pdf, .ps and .svg for fully editable vector-based art; layered .psd and .tif for editable layered art; .psd, .tif, .png and .jpg for bitmap images; .ppt if fully editable and without styling effects; ChemDraw (.cdx) for chemical structures.
- Please use the Nature Research Chemical Structures Guide and ChemDraw template for formatting of chemical structures.

Figure legends should be <350 words each. They should begin with a brief title sentence for the whole figure and continue with a short statement of what is depicted in the figure, not the results (or data) of the experiment or the methods used. Legends should be detailed enough so that each figure and caption can, as far as possible, be understood in isolation from the main text.

Statistical information
Comprehensive information on the statistical analyses used must be included in the paper. The Methods must include a statistics section where you describe the statistical tests used and whether they were one- or two-tailed. Please ensure that the error bars are defined throughout the figures. For all statistics (including error bars), provide the exact n values used to calculate the statistics (reporting individual values rather than a range if n varied among experiments). For representative results, report the number of times that the measurements were repeated. Where relevant, provide exact values for both significant and non-significant P values. For ANOVAs, provide F values and degrees of freedom. For t-tests, provide t-values and degrees of freedom. Please specifically define the replicates.

Supplementary information
Please submit supplementary figures, small tables and text as a single combined Word document (with the pieces in the order: text, figures, tables). Tables longer than one page should be provided as an Excel or similar file type. For optimal quality video files please use H.264 encoding, the standard aspect ratio of 16:9 (4:3 is second best) and do not compress the video. We encourage submission of step-by-step synthesis procedures for chemical compounds and data on compound characterization. Supplementary information is not copy-edited, so please ensure that it is clearly and succinctly presented, and that the style and terminology conform to the rest of the manuscript.

Data availability
Please provide a data availability statement as a separate section after the Methods section but before the References, under the heading “Data Availability”; detailed guidance can be found in our data availability and data citations policy. Certain data types must be deposited in an appropriate public structured data depository (details are available here) and the accession number(s) provided in the manuscript. Full access is required at publication. Should full access to data be required for peer review, authors must provide it.

We encourage provision of other source data in unstructured public depositories such as Dryad or figshare, or as supplementary
information. To maximize data reuse, we encourage publication of detailed descriptions of datasets in Scientific Data.

Crystallographic data
Manuscripts reporting new crystallographic structures of small molecules must be accompanied by a standard .cif file. A structural figure with probability ellipsoids should be included in the main supplementary information file. The structure factors for each structure should also be submitted, preferably embedded in the main .cif file, although they may be provided as a separate .hkl and/or .fcf file. Use of the 2014 version of the program SHELXL, which embeds the structure factors information in the main .cif file, is encouraged. The structure factors and structural output must be checked using IUCr’s CheckCIF routine and a pdf copy of the output supplied, explaining any A- or B-level alerts.

Computer code
Any previously unreported custom computer code used to generate results reported in the manuscript that are central to the main claims must be made available to editors and referees upon request. Any practical issues preventing code sharing will be evaluated by the editors who reserve the right to decline the manuscript if important code is unavailable. At publication, Nature journals consider it best practice to release custom computer code in a way that allows readers to repeat the published results.

For all studies using custom code that is deemed central to the conclusions, a statement must be included in the Methods section, under the heading "Code availability", indicating whether and how the code can be accessed, including any restrictions.

Life sciences reporting guidelines
Life sciences research manuscripts sent for external review must include relevant details about several elements of experimental and analytical design. These requirements aim to improve the transparency of reporting and the reproducibility of published results. They focus on elements of methodological information that are frequently poorly reported (see more details on these elements here). You must complete a reporting checklist to indicate where these details are presented in your manuscript prior to peer review. The completed checklist will be provided to the referees. Guidance and resources related to the use and reporting of statistics are available here.

Other reporting checklist
To improve the transparency of reporting and the reproducibility of published results in certain other research areas, you may be asked to complete a different checklist and provide the requested information prior to peer review.

Human subject data
If you are reporting phase II or phase III randomized controlled trials you must refer to the CONSORT Statement for recommendations to facilitate the complete and transparent reporting of trial findings. Reports that do not conform to the CONSORT guidelines may need to be revised before peer review.

We encourage authors reporting prognostic studies with tumor markers to follow the REMARK reporting guidelines.

Before the start of patient enrollment prospective clinical trials must be registered in www.clinicaltrials.gov or a similar public repository that matches ISMJE criteria and the trial registration number reported in the manuscript. (Trials in which the primary goal is to determine pharmacokinetics are exempt.)

For describing human biospecimens, we recommend referring to the BRISQ reporting guidelines and ensuring at least Tier 1 characteristics are provided (doi: 10.1002/cncy.20147).

Related manuscripts
It is a requirement of submission that you alert us to any related manuscripts with overlapping authorship that are under consideration (including under appeal) or in press at other journals (see our editorial policies on duplicate submissions, for details). Copies of these manuscripts should be clearly marked and included as separate files with your submission. Abstracts or other unrefered preprints do not compromise novelty.

Preprint servers
Nature Research journals support posting of primary research manuscripts on community preprint servers such as arXiv and bioRxiv. We do, however, ask you to respect our policies on posting, citation and licensing of preprints.

Transparent peer review
For published original research articles, the reviewer comments to the authors and the author rebuttal letters of revised versions are published online as a supplementary "peer review file". Authors may opt out of this scheme at the completion of the peer review process, before the paper is accepted. If the manuscript was transferred to us from another Nature journal, we will not publish reviewer reports or author rebuttals of versions of the manuscript under consideration at the originating Nature journal. For more information, please refer to our FAQ page.

Double-blind peer review
To participate in double-blind peer review, please prepare your manuscript in a way that conceals the identities of all the authors (see checklist) and tick the appropriate box during online submission. Please note that editors do not ensure that the paper is properly anonymized; that is the responsibility of the authors.

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Appeals
Authors who feel that they have strong grounds for appealing a decision may contact the journal to request the opening of an appeal, after which they may upload a cogently argued rebuttal letter that addresses the referees’ and/or editor’s comments in a point-by-point manner. Decisions are reversed on appeal only if the editors are convinced that the original decision was made in error, or if critical new information or data has been added.

Comments on published articles
Important scientific comments and clarifications on content published in Nature Communications may be submitted as Correspondence.

Questions and manuscript submission
General editorial enquiries should be addressed to the Editor at naturecommunications@nature.com. Manuscripts should be submitted through our online submission system. Further submission details are available here.

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