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Ms. Particular Presents: The Naked “This”

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Ms. Particular is particularly horrified by the hordes of naked “this”es that parade shamelessly through scientific articles. While a reader lacking Ms. Particular’s finely tuned sensibilities may not be shocked by a naked “this,” he or she will invariably be confused by one.

Here’s an example:

“In some pellet designs, the average ionic charge, Z , and the laser intensity, I , are large enough that the distribution function is predicted to be non-Maxwellian (flat-topped).



This has important consequences: reduction of the absorption rate, electron flux, and modification of the continuum x-ray emission rates.”

The question is: “This” *what*? The pellet design, Z , I , the non-Maxwellian distribution, all of the above, everything I’ve said up to this point in the paper??? **WHAT?????** (Sorry to shout, but Ms. Particular gets quite excited about this rhetorical flaw.)

Always follow “this” (and every other indefinite pronoun) with a clarifying noun that tells the reader what “this” you are referring to.