DO
• Break up text heavy pages with headings, sub-headings, schematics and figures
• Put title of proposal on first page (aims)
• Make it easy to navigate and reference key points/data quickly
• Highlight key preliminary data with the impact to the proposed work (this demonstrates that…)
• Include a summary of approach figure/schematic in specific aims or Introduction section to help the Reviewer understand how the aims build on each other and fit in the overall project goal
• Include figures that illustrate the overall project scope on the 1st page of significance, as well as images that illustrate each Aim.
• Emphasize/repeat major key points in different sections (aims, intro, results, research plan)
• For NIH - bullet or numbered list of significance and innovation
• Clearly articulate innovation – so that someone not in your immediate field would understand the impact
• Leave space between paragraphs so it is easier to read (don't pack it all in!)
• Use the largest font size possible for preliminary data figures labels and text so they are easily readable
• Put n values and scales in data figures
• Power analysis underlying the justification of sample size should be part of the experimental design section and again in the vertebrate animal section
• Avoid typos (spell check should catch most of them)
• Discuss ‘real’ potential limitations and alternative strategies
• Clearly define investigator roles WITHIN proposal.
• Clearly describe each investigator's role (personnel justification, approach, biosketches)
• Include information that supports collaboration – number of joint publications, meetings, etc. (in approach and personnel justification)

DO NOT
• Aims that are completely dependent on previous aim
• Assume that your reviewer is in your specific area - highlight impact of key findings or advantages of approach
• Use too much highlighting, underlining, italicization
• Use small fonts in figures
• Use microscopic figures with useless one sentence captions that require reviewers to go back to text to figure out abbrev, etc.
• Make figures so small they are not readable
• Overuse acronyms or make plot labels difficult to identify
• Ignore formatting requirements - ever-changing, so keep up to date
• Improperly formatted biosketches and inclusion of papers under review
• Mis-cited or dead references (v. annoying and suggests carelessness).
• Only cite your previous mentor and your work.
• For NIH - do not forget the authentication document with consideration of sex as a biological variable
• Ignore previous review critique or insufficient revision to address concerns