1. Specific Aims (1/2 page):
   - set the scene with very few introductory sentences
   - list anywhere from 1 to 5 aims of your planned work

2. Background and Significance (1 page):
   - review the state of the art of your field; give enough information to appreciate the context of the proposed work, not more
   - indicate the outstanding questions/gaps in knowledge
   - point out how you expect to fill them

3. Preliminary Data (1 page):
   - list the data you have acquired as well as materials and tools you have generated that pertain to your proposal; include figures if these illustrate your work
   - important (unpublished) contributions of your collaborators, PI or colleagues are also worth mentioning if they have relevance for your project
   - list everything by specific aim, if possible

4. Research Plan (1-2 pages):
   - structure according to specific aims
   - divide into “rationale”, “experimental design” and “methods” sections if possible
   - give plenty of detail on aspects that are not standard; omit detailed information on aspects that are (like how to do a Western Blot or PCR)
   - include figures such as flow charts or schematics of work flow if these illustrate your plans
   - have a “pitfalls and alternative approaches” section; list back-up strategies
   - add a short concluding paragraph explaining what you expect to learn

5. Timeline:
   - experimental plan for your 1st, 2nd and 3rd year

6. References