



## PUBLISHING, PUBLISHING TIPS & PRESENTATION TIPS

### Why publish?

- To get your message out! Publishing in peer-reviewed journals or books is a way of disseminating your work especially in the scientific community.
- To advance your career. For better or worse, internationally peer-reviewed publications are weighed highly in hiring and promotion for scientific or research jobs.
- To increase your network. Sharing your results with the scientific community usually results in very useful feedback for your research.

### Publishing Tips:

#### *Before submission*

- Check journal to be sure your topic and methods match the journal theme (e.g. if it is a very quantitative or theoretical journal, it is a waste of time to send a qualitative or empirical case - find a journal with a better match.)
- Read all the Instructions to Authors. Make sure your manuscript is within the length limits and follows the formatting requirements, including those for tables, figures, and references. Make sure references are complete, including volume and page numbers. This will save time in the long run.
- Have someone read over your paper to ensure clarity and language accuracy (grammar, spelling, etc). This will facilitate easy reading and review by the editors and reviewers.

#### *When the reviews are received*

- If the paper gets accepted or accepted with very few revisions, CONGRATULATIONS! This is quite rare, even for well-established academics. Follow-up promptly on any requested changes, verify reference lists and citations and address queries when needed, etc.
- If your paper is rejected, don't be discouraged. Consider whether the reviewers' comments could strengthen the paper and if there are other publication outlets that might be a better fit for that paper. (Be careful, though, if your paper has been rejected by one journal because of problems identified by a reviewer, don't submit the same version to another journal, as it might go back to the same reviewer).
- If the reply is to "revise and resubmit", Congratulations! Many good journals have outright rejection rates of 50-75%.
  - Carefully read the editor's recommendation, which may highlight the most important changes, or give you guidance if the reviewers give conflicting advice.
  - Carefully read all reviewers' comments. Even if the reviewers are critical or sound



harsh, try not to be offended. These are usually experts in the field who have taken their time to read and comment on your paper with a view to strengthen it. However, the "scientific culture" of many fields may lead to comments that sound sharp. However, take it as a chance to reflect on your work and improve its relevance for your colleagues. Usually, comments that sound harsh in the beginning are those that really help to improve your paper considerably.

- If the editor has given a deadline for revisions, meet the deadline, or if the deadline cannot be met, write to the editor as soon as possible to ask for an extension. If no deadline is given, try to respond within 2-3 months.
- Consider how you can address each comment. Some can be taken care of with a simple change of wording or adding a footnote, but others may require bigger changes to the structure of your paper (e.g. cut repetitions or add in a section) or changes to your analysis (e.g. adding a variable, running other tests). Make these changes as well as you can.
- When you have made the changes, prepare a detailed response that indicates how you have dealt with each comment, and submit this response with your revised paper. Most journals will not publish your paper without your response to the reviewers' comments.
- If you disagree with a comment or cannot address it, explain why in your response instead of ignoring it. Be sure that the tone of your response is respectful (even if you disagree with or do not think that the reviewer was respectful).
- Before submitting the revised version, go over it to be sure it is "clean". Ideally, have a colleague or someone else read over it as well.
- When you receive the copy editors' queries and/or the proofs of the article, **RESPOND PROMPTLY AND COMPLETELY**. You may be given a very short timeline (2-3 days) to respond, and any delay on your part can hold up publication of an issue or have your paper dropped. Proofread the final version and answer any questions, supply missing information, references, etc. Please note: Some journals make you pay for changes after you have accepted the proofs.

### **Conference and Workshop Papers and Publications:**

- Many of these tips also apply to conference papers and publications, but the stakes can be even higher in terms of your professional reputation. This is especially important if you are an invited speaker, and/or if your travel or other expenses are being sponsored by the organizers or another funding agency.
- Remember that someone is going to a lot of effort to organize the meeting and any follow-up on publications. Your timely and high-quality contribution will be greatly appreciated; delays can hold everyone up.
- Submit your abstract and your paper by the deadline. This is often well before the workshop dates so that abstracts or full papers can be distributed to all participants. If no deadline is given, be sure to have your paper ready by the time of the conference, unless you have been advised otherwise. Ensure that your abstract is a clear and concise summary of your paper with the main



result(s) clearly spelt out. Ensure that the length of both abstract and paper are below the limit given by the conference organizers (this is also true for submission of papers for publication!). Use word count to check this!

- Take notes at the meeting on comments or questions on your paper and other ideas from other papers or discussions that suggest how you may want to strengthen your paper.
- Respond to any reviewer's comments or to the editors of the publication, as discussed for publications purposes. Be especially sure to meet deadlines; if you cannot meet the deadlines, discuss this with the editor as soon as possible to see what can be done.

## **Presentation Tips:**

### *Consider your audience*

- Are they scientists in your field, in another field, development practitioners, farmers, general public? How much will they already know, and what aspects of your topic will interest them? Will they be familiar with the jargon and acronyms used? Adapt your material to the audience.
- Stick to your time limits. Prior to presenting, find out the time allocation for your presentation. If you are scheduled for one hour, take note that part of that time may be reserved for discussion or question and answer portion.
- Plan your content to fit the time.
  - If you are given one hour or 40 minutes, you may be able to cover a whole paper
  - With 15-30 minutes, you will have to focus on key aspects
  - If you are given 5 minutes, decide on a couple of key points to address

You may have more to say, but if you run overtime, you are taking time away from the discussion time or from other speakers, or from the very important breaks, or keeping people overtime. (In one meeting, the speaker asked the chair how long he could talk – the chair replied “you can talk as long as you like. We will stop listening in 20 minutes.”) Keeping to time shows respect for the organizers, the other speakers, and the audience.

- When preparing your slides, make sure the fonts are not too small. It is not wise to cram too much information into a single slide and reducing the font size so that everything fits in. Ideally, only main ideas or key talk points should be presented on the slide and details should be explained orally instead.
- Do not plan on talking too fast. When giving a presentation, you cannot talk as fast as in a conversation, especially if some members of your audience are not fluent in the language being used or speak the language with a different accent. As a general guide, you can plan on saying 100 words per minute in English.
- Learn by observing other speakers: try to imitate qualities of talks that you find clear, interesting and effective. Try to avoid things that other speakers do, or the behaviors of speakers which bother you, and learn from their mistakes!



- If there are key points you are unable to cover in the time available, you may be able to mention them in passing, so people who are interested can follow-up during the discussion or read it in your paper.
- **Plan out your talk.** In a very formal presentation, a speech can be read but in most contexts, it is better that talks be made from notes.
- **Practice your talk.** If possible, do this with a colleague or someone else who will give you feedback, and also practice looking up to make eye contact. Know how you could cut a bit from your presentation if time is running out. If you have the possibility to practice in a large room similar to where you will have to present, do so. It will also help you to practice using a microphone!
- **Visual aids** (e.g. overheads, slides, PowerPoint, video clips) can be helpful, but if they are not well-done, can also be a distraction. Thus, aids should be kept to a minimum; include only those that are significantly essential to the presentation.
  - A few key words can help people follow your talk (especially if there are differences in language or accent), but reading out the slides will get boring or annoying.
  - The easiest visual information for the audience to digest are: i) pictures, ii) figures or graphs, iii) text, iv) numbers, v) equations
  - Whatever visual aids you use, make sure people can read them from the back or end of the room. As a general rule, use at least 16-point font (as a quick test, print out your overhead or PowerPoint slide and put it on the floor. You should be able to read it when standing up).
  - If you do use figures and graphs, be sure to explain what the axes mean. Allow about two minutes for each graph!
  - If red and green colors are used for contrasting effects, please bear in mind that color-blind people may not be able to distinguish them. In general, it is useful to test the color scheme produced by the projector compared to the one on your computer monitor as they might differ considerably and sharp contrasts / clear colors on the monitor might be much softer and more difficult to see projected onto a big screen.
  - Avoid distracting (or annoying) backgrounds or transitions. Animated slide transitions take extra time. In general, dark backgrounds may be harder to read or make it harder for the audience to see the speaker.
  - Check with the organizers that the necessary equipment (projector, screen, LCD, etc) will be available. Also be sure that the file size is within the capacity of what can be transferred (e.g. if the computer used does not have a USB port, you may then have to put it on a CD).
  - Take a backup hard copy of your presentation that you can refer to in case technology fails. Do not assume that all conference venues have the facilities to project powerpoint presentations or video clips, ask the organizers first. If you cannot obtain a clear answer, take a set of transparencies just in case.



- When you arrive at the meeting, make sure that the organizers have your materials and test that they work, so that time is not lost from your presentation (and the audience's attention is not lost, too!).

### *Just before presenting*

- Meet the chair. Make sure he/she knows how to introduce you and importantly, the topic that you will discuss.
- Make sure that there is a way to keep track of time, either a clock you can see, or the chair or someone else giving you a signal, e.g. when you have 5 minutes remaining and when your time is up.
- Make sure you can be heard and understood from the back, either by testing during the break, before you start, or someone to signal to you when you start.
- Be on time (or even early) and ready to start on time.

### *When you present*

- Talk clearly
- Engage with your audience, especially making eye contact, conveying your interest in your own topic
- If you get a signal to wrap up, go to your conclusions – do not try to cover all you had planned

### *Responding to questions*

- Take notes of questions, especially if several questions are asked in a row.
- Respond courteously even if the questions sound hostile.
- Try to make your responses fairly brief but concise. Offer to follow up with interested people if more details are required.

### **Produced by: IFPRI and G&D**

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