

*Notes from*

**"How to Get Published in Health Sciences  
and Human Services Journals"**

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General Guidelines

Most physicians, nurses, and social workers do not publish anything, but then neither do most human service of health care professionals, including psychologists, dentists, lawyers, etc. Writing for publication can be viewed as a professional skill, like any other, and can be carefully cultivated and learned by almost any reasonably intelligent person (clinical interview, physical examination, mental status examination, etc.).

Target your journal: Is it an old, established, prestigious publication or a newer, less well-known journal? Is there a publication charge? Is the journal abstracted (e.g. Index Medicus?) What publication style does the journal use? (Generally, APA style is required by social science journals; however, social work journals may require a different publication style than psychology journals, and psychiatry journals may be different from both.) Read the instructions for authors and prepare the manuscript accordingly. Follow the author's instructions to the letter, especially the referencing format.

Prepare your manuscript on a wordprocessor yourself (Wordperfect of Macintosh). Or pay a reliable person to do it for you using a common system. Make sure they give you a copy of the disk. If need be, pay for this out of your own pocket. Ideally, use a system with a spellcheck and a grammar checker.

Let the manuscript rest a day or so and then re-read it slowly. Revise and have it reprinted. Circulate it among peers and ask for their written comments, to be placed directly on the manuscript itself. Ask them to look for unclear sentences, paragraphs, loose structure,

etc.

Submit the manuscript properly. Send the correct number of copies, and a short letter (not a lengthy one!) along the lines of the one I display. Points to include are that the work is original, unpublished, and not under concurrent editorial review.

Now comes the hardest part. Chill out--be patient. Some (most) journals take months to make a decision. You deserve a prompt (within a month) acknowledgement of your submission. Do not hesitate to send letters of inquiry if you don't get an acknowledgement.

You will eventually receive a decision. ACCEPT AS IT IS: least likely. REVISE AND RESUBMIT: very possible. REJECTED: most likely. Anticipate rejections: Develop, in advance, a hierarchical list of potential journals to send your manuscript.

#### Consider Submitting a Variety of Forms of Scholarship

Keep in mind that empirical research is a special part of scholarly publications (perhaps the most important part), but that in many fields the majority of articles are non-empirical. In contemplating becoming a published author, you have many other options besides Research!

Here is a partial listing:

1. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
2. BOOK REVIEWS
3. RESPONSES TO PUBLISHED ARTICLES
4. THEORETICAL PAPERS
5. ORIGINAL OPINION OR EDITORIAL ARTICLES
6. CASE HISTORIES WITHOUT DATA
7. DESCRIPTIONS OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS OR TREATMENTS
8. PURELY DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES WITH DATA
9. CORRELATIONAL STUDIES
10. CASE STUDIES WITH DATA, SUCH AS SINGLE-SYSTEM DESIGNS
11. GROUP OUTCOME STUDIES

- a. Retrospectively Designed
- b. Prospectively Designed
12. BOOK CHAPTERS
13. EDIT A BOOK
14. AUTHOR A BOOK
15. POETRY AND OTHER LITERARY WORKS
16. METHODOLOGICAL WORKS
17. RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR PAPERS FOR JOURNALS
18. EDIT YOUR OWN SPECIAL ISSUE OF A JOURNAL, AND SLIP YOUR WORK INTO IT!
19. AS A LAST RESORT, SEND YOUR MANUSCRIPT TO A SUBSIDY PRESS.

ANY OTHER IDEAS?

### Concluding Thoughts

Consider collaboration with other scholars. And, in so doing, do not be picky about the order of authorship. Use deadlines with collaborators. Arrange contingencies to support your writing: e.g., prepare an abstract of a paper and send it in to a professional conference. If it is accepted, you are morally obligated to have the paper ready at the time of the conference. Another strategy is to promise your boss a finished paper by a set date.

Turn manuscripts around quickly--don't let them molder away in the file drawer. Don't wait for that magic period in your life when you will have some free time. It will never happen! Just do it!

### Some Useful References

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