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The Flip Side of Presubmission Reviews and August *JOE* Highlights

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Abstract

In the last issue of *JOE*, I stressed to authors the importance of having one's work read before submitting it. In "The Flip Side of Presubmission Reviews," I explore this topic from the reader's perspective. In "August *JOE* Highlights," I note articles that underscore the need for health-related policy, systems, and environmental change interventions and other programming meant to right inequities as well as articles describing innovations Extensionists have applied to various challenges, including those produced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The Flip Side of Presubmission Reviews

For scholarly authors, the importance of having others read one's manuscript before submitting it for publication cannot be overstated (see the [June 2020 Editor's Page](#) for details). Consequently, reading a colleague's scholarly manuscript prior to submission is a weighty matter. Here I offer advice for how to be most helpful and effective when confronted with this responsibility.

First, consider that you may serve your colleague best by declining to act as a reader. Criteria that will allow you to perform an effective review include familiarity with the journal to which the author is submitting and, conversely, lack of familiarity with the author's study, program, or project. You need a solid understanding of the target journal to ensure that the manuscript aligns with its purpose and scope. On the other hand, you'll be better able to judge other merits of the manuscript if you must read it to learn about the work your colleague performed. Your job is to convey perspectives and notice issues the author cannot due to proximity to the work. You can serve this function only if you come to the manuscript with objectivity and without germane prior knowledge. Another factor to consider before agreeing to read a manuscript is whether you will have adequate time to dedicate to the task. Rushing through your review will not generate the input your colleague needs to perfect the manuscript before submitting it. If you must decline a request to read a manuscript, give thoughtful consideration to identifying other potential readers and recommend those individuals to the author.

Second, perform a thorough review by attending to various critical facets of the manuscript, making repeated passes through the work as needed to focus fully on each discrete aspect. In the *JOE* author aid [Getting Published in *JOE*—Strategies for Success](#), I suggest that readers review a manuscript for

- appropriateness of the designated article category (if applicable);
- effectiveness of the title and abstract;
- organization, coherence, and focus in development of the topic;
- methodological rigor;
- consistency and accuracy in presentations and discussions of data;
- clearly delineated implications for readers of the target journal;
- clarity and preciseness of the writing;
- proper grammar, mechanics, and style; and
- avoidance of errors of carelessness.

Third, take care to provide feedback that is clear and comprehensive. The more insights you provide about why a title is less than effective, how the story of the author's endeavor could be conveyed more compellingly, what questions about the methodology remain unanswered, and so on, the more useful your review will be and thus the more valuable the time spent conducting it. Also, although it is not incumbent on you to identify all instances of grammatical, mechanical, style, and typographical errors, you should determine whether the prevalence of such issues warrants recommendation that the author work with an editor before submission.

When you read another's manuscript, you're providing a service not only to a colleague but to all the readers who may eventually engage with your colleague's written work and to the field overall. Applying the most conscientious effort possible is imperative.

August *JOE* Highlights

The persisting COVID-19 pandemic has shone a bright light on health disparities previously invidious to those not serving at the community level, underscoring the ongoing need for Extension professionals to engage in health-related policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change interventions. Two articles by the same author team address this need. The Ideas at Work entry "[Two States, One Mission: Building Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Capacity of County Extension Educators](#)" describes a training for increasing Extension professionals' ability to effect PSE change, and the Tools of the Trade offering "[Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change: A Planning Tool for Community Health Implementation](#)" presents a four-step method that was incorporated into the training and can be used to generate local PSE change programming. Additionally, the authors of the Research in Brief "[Addressing Facilitators and Barriers Related to Early Childhood Obesity Prevention in Rural Appalachian Communities](#)" describe the methods and outcomes of a needs assessment that led members of underresourced communities to improve healthful eating and physical activity options for local children and families.

Because the pandemic also has accentuated connections between health disparities and other inequities, such as the educational inequalities or social isolation faced by some groups, subjects of other articles seem more

topical than ever. These include the Research in Briefs "[Impact of a Language and Literacy Training and Coaching Intervention on Early Childhood Outcomes in Low-Income Communities](#)" and "[Improving Parental Engagement for Latino Youths' Educational Success: Lessons from Juntos Oregon](#)" and the Tools of the Trade contribution "['Making the Best Better' for Youths: Cultivating LGBTQ+ Inclusion in 4-H.](#)"

Other articles address innovations related to varied aspects of Extension work, including the recently added area of pandemic response. Examples are the lead Commentary "[Activating Volunteers for Statewide COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#)"; the Research in Brief options "[Questions Farmers Ask: Implications for Improving Information Resources for Farmer Audiences](#)," "[Using an Immediate Feedback Tool to Improve Learning and Facilitate Program Evaluation](#)," and "[Quantifying Attitudes and Knowledge Change About the Meat-Animal Industry via a Massive Open Online Course](#)"; the Ideas at Work entry "[Revising Curricula Through the Use of Lesson Study](#)"; and the Tools of the Trade article "['Ask the Ag Agent' Weekly Webinar Series: Agriculture-Focused Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)" In all, the issue provides an array of information on subjects of interest to readers across all discipline areas.

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