



Publishing in Peer Review Journals: Criteria for Success

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Publishing in peer review journals facilitates knowledge sharing, thereby enabling individuals and organisations to contribute to the body of evidence on best practice. The following criteria have been developed to increase the chances of your paper being published in a peer reviewed journal.

Preparing to write your paper

Aim of paper is clearly defined

Key attributes of a clear aim are specificity, originality and relevance to the readership.¹

The clearer you are about the aim of the paper, the easier the writing will be.

Conditions for authorship are followed

Papers often have more than one author, and decisions on how articles should be credited can be contentious. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors states that authors should meet the following conditions:

- 1 'substantial contribution to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data'
- 2 'drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content'
- 3 'final approval of the version to be published'.²

An appropriate journal is selected

Before writing, select a journal which is:

- best suited to your work and your message
- easily accessible to the readership you want to influence.

Papers are often rejected because:

- they do not suit the journal to which they are submitted³, or
- the authors did not follow the journal's guidelines.

Before writing, get a feel for the types of articles published by reading recent issues of that journal. If you need help with choosing a journal, speak with your peers or try the journal match site Biosemantics (www.biosemantics.org/jane) to get started. If you are not sure your paper is appropriate for the journal, contact the editor to discuss your idea with them.

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Author guidelines are followed

Following author guidelines is absolutely crucial. Guidelines will provide important information such as word limits, referencing styles, formatting information and submission details.

Prescribed referencing style is followed

Referencing styles should be followed carefully. Endnote and other similar software programs are useful tools for keeping track of references. They allow you to:

- enter references into a database which can then be used across multiple documents,
- create accurate reference lists which can be quickly and easily changed to meet the requirements of different journals.

Writing your paper

Title conveys key message clearly

The title of your paper should convey the paper's key message clearly and succinctly, to keep you focussed on it trying to devise a draft version of your title before you begin writing.⁴

The paper has an abstract, introduction, body and conclusion

- **Abstract** – is a summary of the key points of your work and is best written last so that it conveys an accurate summary of the paper's content and theme. It is also your opportunity to engage the reader's interest.
- **Introduction** – describes what you are going to say. It describes your review of the relevant literature, the context in which your work is placed, your rationale for writing about the issue and the aim of the paper.
- **Body** – focuses on what you did (method), what you found (results) and what this means (discussion). The discussion also answers the 'so what?' question, demonstrating why your research is important.
- **Conclusion** – briefly outlines what you found, how this builds on the body of knowledge and any limitations to your work.



Writing is easily understood

'A paper is well written if a reader who is not involved in the work can understand every single sentence in the paper'.⁵ Writing effectively involves ensuring that the intended message is easily conveyed to and understood by the reader. Test this by asking someone who was not involved in your research to edit or provide feedback on your paper.

Tables and figures capture information concisely

Tables and figures:

- can reduce the length of the paper by displaying data concisely and efficiently
- should complement – not repeat – information in the text.

Be sure they are cited in the text and include suitable headings and explanatory footnotes if required.

Paper is subjected to editing and feedback

It is quite common for a paper to undergo several drafts before being submitted.

Writing groups are effective in providing suggestions for improving papers. They:

- keep the momentum going during the writing process,
- improve publication rates and
- give members opportunities for continual learning.⁶

Realistic timelines are set

Set realistic timelines with the authors to maintain writing momentum.

Submitting your paper

Submission guidelines are followed

Follow the specific guidelines for submission carefully so your paper is received and reviewed.

If you don't hear from the editor for some time, contact them to find out what progress has been made.

Be aware when submitting your article that some journals charge publication fees, or a fee to make it available for rapid access or open access (OAC). The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) provides information on applicable fees as well as a comprehensive linking to OAC journals (www.doaj.org).

Peer review process is understood and used

Once your paper has been submitted experts in the field are invited to review and comment on it and recommend whether the paper be published or not. These comments and those of the editor are then sent to the authors. The author then needs to respond to these comments either by making changes or making a case as to why these changes can't be made.

Don't be discouraged if your paper is initially rejected. There are several reasons why this may occur:

- your paper may not have met guidelines,
- it may be better suited to another journal,
- it requires further editing.

So try again, keeping in mind any feedback you have received.

Your paper is accepted

It may take some time before it is published, however, you can add the reference to your resume prior to publication, by citing the paper as being 'in press'.

Resources

PHCRIS Getting Started Guides: How to... Publish in peer review journals

http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/publish_article.php

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