

----- Getting Published in Academic Journals -----

Getting Ready – Set up Paper Writing as a Routine Activity

- Establish a **daily writing schedule**, even if only 30 minutes a day, and stick to it. Avoid binge-writing. Research shows that regular writers are much more productive over the long term.
- **Present your research** at academic conferences or at campus venues. Such commitments help impose writing deadlines. Preparing an oral presentation forces you to distill arguments into key points and central narratives.
- Seek out multiple ways to **get critical comments** on your written drafts. Create or join a small writing group to exchange drafts and comments. Join a workshop on your topic. Get faculty to read and comment on papers. Follow-up with course instructors on class papers.
- **Rewriting is normal, and necessary.** Many papers are re-written three, four or more times.
- Encourage feedback from everyone, but also **learn to evaluate feedback.** Take suggestions that make sense seriously, put aside suggestions outside the scope of the project, and ignore advice with which you fundamentally disagree. (Do a reality check, though – is the advice really wrong, or do you just want to ignore it because it is dead-on, difficult or otherwise disconcerting?)

Deciding to Submit to a Journal, and Choosing a Journal

- By the third or fourth draft, if you think (or a faculty member thinks) that the paper is in decent shape, **send it off!** Don't wait for it to be "perfect" – it never will be.
- **Aim for a better journal**—a top one in your discipline or sub-field. Don't go with the "easy" lower-tier journal just to get a line in your CV. Placement matters—more people will read your work and 'rewards' (such as job offers and promotion) are better. Reviews tend to be of higher quality, too.
 - Look at the journals you cite to identify possible publication venues. Where do the top people in your field publish? Check with faculty and colleagues for ideas. Look at the "impact" scores of which journals get more citations.
- Pick up a recent copy of the journal or look online to **follow guidelines on how to submit** the article, e.g. number of copies, format (hardcopy or electronic), style guidelines, etc.
- Write a **short cover letter** with your submission indicating what sorts of people might be well-suited to review your work (e.g. specific sub-fields or methods). You can also indicate who should not review your work (and why). Editors can ignore or follow your recommendations.
- **Send it off and be prepared to wait 3 to 6 months.** Most journals will send a manuscript to 2-4 reviewers. Sometimes you can track the progress of the review electronically; other times you wait for a letter. If you hear nothing after four months, you can send a polite email asking about the status of your submission.

- **Understanding editors' letters and reviews can be an art form.** Get help.
 - **Submissions can be:** (1) rejected outright; (2) rejected with an invitation to resubmit a substantially new version; (3) given a "revise and resubmit" at various levels of enthusiasm; (4) accepted, conditional on minor changes; or (5) accepted outright [this almost never happens].
- (1) **outright rejection** – the journal will not publish the article; you cannot resubmit it to the journal.
 - If this happens, take heart: most journals reject over half of all submission, and many reject 90% of everything sent to them; you are not alone.
 - Look at the reviews and evaluate them honestly. Ask for advice. Depending on your time line and investment in the project, decide how much to revise, and then send it to a new journal.
 - (2) **reject, with invitation to resubmit** – the article is rejected, but you may resubmit a thorough revision (as a new submission) to the same journal.
 - Follow the same process as above. Depending on your time line and investment in the project, do a thorough overhaul and resubmit to the same journal, or send it elsewhere.
 - (3) **"revise and re-submit" [R & R]** – the reviewers found merit in your submission, and feel it could be published, but only after revisions; publication is not guaranteed – your revised submission will be reviewed again by some of the original reviewers, new reviewers, or a mix of the two.
 - *Congratulations!* Outright acceptance is extremely rare – you have a chance to get published! Depending on the journal, about half of resubmitted articles get published. (Many are never re-submitted; don't let that happen to you!)
 - Evaluate the review, with help. Some editors will signal the extent of revisions needed (and chances of publication) by requesting "major revisions" or "modest changes." They might indicate which reviews they weigh more heavily. Pay attention to such signals.
 - Separate criticism into major, moderate and minor. Try to do all minor changes (e.g. adding references, modifying tables, etc.) Decide which major and moderate revisions make sense and which seem wrong or beside the point. Evaluate every suggestion.
 - Rewrite, taking into account all suggestions that have merit. (This might mean doing more data collection, new modeling and reading new literatures.)
 - Where you disagree with reviewers' suggestions, write out a short argument why. If reviewers are out to lunch or miss the point, how can you re-word or re-frame your work to avoid such confusion? If the reviewers contradict each other or you envision serious problems in addressing the reviews, you can contact the editor for clarification.
 - Write a response memo to the editor and reviewers outlining what you did for *each* comment from all reviewers. Get one or two experienced writers to look over the memo.
 - Resubmit the article, with the response to reviewers. Wait another 3-6 months.
 - If you are rejected after an "R&R," evaluate the reviews, make worthwhile, easy changes, and send it off again, perhaps to a more specialized journal or a slightly less prestigious one. However, if you think it is a good paper, try for a good journal again. *Remember, a lot of the review process is arbitrary*; much depends on the editor and the reviewers selected.
 - (4) **accepted, conditional on minor changes** – the article will be published, as long as you do the minor change requested. Congratulations! Acceptance is extremely rare. This is great news.
 - Try to make all suggested revisions. If some can't be done, write a note to the editor explaining why. Send in the revised paper and a short "response to reviewers" memo outlining changes.
 - Depending on the journal, you will have one chance to check proofs for errors. Do this!
 - Wait for publication – it could take 9-24 months (including copy and proof editing).