

Writing for academic journals

Academic Journals Ranking

- Widely used in academic circles
- Its basically an evaluation of the academic journals impact and quality
- Journal rankings is to see
 - the place of the journal in the field,
 - its relative difficulty of being published and
 - prestige associated with it.

Writing for academic journals is highly competitive.

- Challenges that will confront all academic writers regardless of their discipline are:
 - The writing will capture the interest of reviewers?
 - How should you respond to reviewer feedback?
 - Is there a correct way to structure a paper?
 - And should you always bother revising and resubmitting?

Academic writing

- Academic writing requires you to develop an argument and demonstrate relationships between the idea you are expressing
- Ability to express clearly and accurately is important.
 - Be clear and concise;
 - It must be based on research - cite cases, laws or regulations;
 - Objective – words should be neutral, showing neither too much emotion nor attitude.

Poorly written papers

- One of the problems that journal editors face is poorly written papers in English.
- It might be that the writer's first language isn't English and they haven't gone the extra mile to get it proofread.
- It can be very hard to work out what is going on in an article if the language and arrangements are poor.

Journal Scope

- Check that your article is within the scope of the journal that you are submitting to.
- This seems so obvious but it's surprising how many articles are submitted to journals that are completely inappropriate.
- Ideally, look through a number of recent issues to ensure that it is publishing articles on the same topic and that are of similar quality and impact.

Instructions to Authors

- Often authors don't spend the 10 minutes it takes to read the instructions to authors which wastes enormous quantities of time for both the author and the editor and stretches the process when it does not need to.

Writing reviews & replies to papers

- Writing reviews is a good way to get published - especially for people who are in the early stages of their career.
- It's a chance to practice at writing a piece for publication.
- Some journals, publish replies to papers that have been published in the same journal.
- Editors quite like to publish replies to previous papers because it stimulates discussion.

Include international context

- We get people who write from US who assume everyone knows the US system - and the same happens with UK writers.
- If the journal is an international journal, we need writers to include the international context or comparative with other countries or systems

Know the editorial board

- It is a bad sign if you do not recognise the names of any members of the editorial board.
- Board members: know their expertise, writings, their scholarly publications etc.

Cover letter

- The editors look to the cover letter for an indication from author about what he think is most interesting and significant about the paper, and why he think it is a good fit for the journal.

- There is no need to repeat the abstract or go through the content of the paper in detail – the editors will read the paper itself to find out what it says.
- The cover letter is a place for a bigger picture outline, plus any other information that you would like the editor to have.

Lack of context: Common reason for rejections

- A common reason for articles being rejected after peer review is this lack of context or lack of clarity about why the research is important.
- Take some time before even writing your paper to think about the logic/purpose of the presentation.
- Make sure that it is clear where your research sits within the wider scholarly landscape, and which gaps in knowledge it's addressing.

Reviewer comments

- **Respond directly (and calmly) to reviewer comments.**
- Don't respond to reviewer feedback as soon as you get it.
- Read it, think about it for several days, discuss it with others, and then draft a response.

Revise and resubmit

- **Don't give up after getting through all the major hurdles.**
- You'd be surprised how many authors who receive the standard "revise and resubmit" letter never actually do so.

- But it is worth doing - some authors who get asked to do major revisions persevere and end up getting their work published, yet others, who had far less to do, never resubmit.
- It seems silly to get through the major hurdles of writing the article, getting it past the editors and back from peer review only to then give up.

- When resubmitting a paper following revisions, include a detailed document summarising all the changes suggested by the reviewers, and how you have changed your manuscript in light of them.

Challenging reviewers with good justification

- It is acceptable to decline a reviewer's suggestion to change a component of your article if you have a good justification, or can (politely) argue why the reviewer is wrong.
- A rational explanation will be accepted by editors, especially if it is clear you have considered all the feedback received and accepted some of it.

Think about how quickly you want to see your paper published.

- Some journals rank more highly than others and so your risk of rejection is going to be greater.
- People need to think about whether or not they need to see their work published quickly - because certain journals will take longer.
- Some journals also do advance access so once the article is accepted it appears on the journal website.
- This is important if you're preparing for promotion and need to show that you are publishable.

- **Remember: when you read published papers you only see the finished article.**
- When you read published papers' you see the finished article, not the first draft, nor the first revise and resubmit, nor any of the intermediate versions – and you never see the failures.

Advise ; Tips

- First, read the journal's submission guidelines or instructions for authors.
- The editors often specify whether they want single- or double-spaced, Word or PDF, footnotes or endnotes, and so on.

- Some editors might look past odd formatting, typographical errors, and sloppy citations to see the brilliance of a paper.
- But why make them?
- Faced with two papers that are comparable in content, most editors will choose the one that will be easier to edit.
- Take the time and care to make your paper look good.

- Your abstract will be the first thing most editors see when they review your paper.
- It is your first chance to explain why your topic is interesting and important and how your paper makes a contribution to the field.

- Make sure that it is well-crafted and clear.
- Proofread it carefully: there's no need to turn off editors before they even start skimming the article!
- Lastly, remember that the editors have not been thinking about your topic as much as you have—in fact, they might know nothing about your topic.