

University Library: Skills for Researchers

Preparing for publication: journal articles

Across all academic disciplines, publishing your research in a journal is an important step professionally and an essential way to disseminate your work to an academic audience. Demonstrating that your research is of a publishable standard is crucial, particularly if you plan to move into an academic role after finishing your doctorate. You must consider carefully where to publish, however; some journals are more reputable than others, and aspects of a journal such as the impact factor may also be important for your subject area. Overall, you should aim to publish in a journal that is relevant for your subject, is peer-reviewed, and well respected.

Consider the following when selecting a journal:

Areas to consider	Explanation of Criteria
Aims & Scope of the Journal	Look for a section entitled "About the Journal", "Full Aims and Scope", "Coverage" or similar on the journal's homepage. Browsing through this page will provide you with key information about whether your research might be a good match for the journal.
The Guide for Authors	This will provide you with important information about how to format and present your article, as well as essential requirements such as a minimum or maximum word count. If your article includes any diagrams, tables, graphs or images, formatting requirements for these will also be outlined, as well as the referencing style. An idea of the submission and acceptance process is usually provided.
Has the journal published articles similar to yours?	Consider performing a search with the keywords (or title) of your manuscript to determine whether the journal has published work that is similar to yours. Aim to identify 3-5 papers published within the last 5 years and try to check if these are similar to yours in quality and scope.
What are the journal's restrictions?	For example, if your manuscript is 4,000 words and the journal asks for a minimum of 7,000, you will need to develop and expand on your research and writing.
What is the impact factor?	The impact factor is a method for indicating the quality and reputation of a journal. However, it is not realistic to submit a manuscript to a journal with a very high impact factor if it does not match the area or level of your research. You can check journal impact factors using 'Journal Citation Reports' (provides citation data for journals in the sciences and social sciences.) It can show you the most frequently cited journals in a field based on a calculated impact factor. (Visit our Databases A-Z page and select 'J' for Journal Citation Report: www.wlv.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases-a-z/)

Does the journal have a specific audience?	Do you want to reach an international, European or British audience, or focus on a very particular audience? Some journals will be very niche whereas others might be slightly broader in their scope and appeal.
Is the journal peer reviewed?	Also known as scholarly journal, academic journal, or refereed journal. Peer-reviewing is essentially a quality control process where original research articles are subjected to a rigorous evaluation by a panel of experts before being accepted for publication. Most scholarly articles go through the peer-review process.

You can use the above criteria to help you decide on a list of possible journals; remember that it is always worth sending your article to a more prestigious or higher-ranked journal first, if it is a good fit for your research. They may reject your submission (in which case you can try the next on your list, and so on) but there is every chance that they will be interested in publishing your work.

Submitting to a journal:

Make sure you have prepared your article as thoroughly as possible before submitting. This involves checking that:

- It is written appropriately for its intended audience
- It is the right word length and makes a valid contribution in terms of research or ideas
- It is correctly and accurately referenced throughout in keeping with the journal's style
- All formatting (for example of tables, images, graphs etc.) is correctly laid out and it has been thoroughly proofread

Revising your article:

Journal articles will almost always require revisions before being published. Generally, if a journal is interested in publishing your paper, they will send it to a few reviewers for feedback. You will then be required to change the article in line with their recommendations or provide logical and well-justified reasons for not making any specific changes that you disagree with. Usually, you will need to satisfy these reviewers before the journal's editor is happy to accept the final copy for publication.

Help and Advice

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