A Publisher’s Guide to Writing for Scholarly Publications and understanding the Review Process

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Rutgers
Agenda

• Publisher’s Guide to Writing a Manuscript
• What steps do I need to take before writing my paper?
• How to develop and submit my manuscript
• What Editors are looking for
• Tips about the Review process
• How to get your paper noticed
Publisher’s Guide to Writing a Manuscript
What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?

How can I ensure I am using proper scientific language?

How do I properly build my paper?
An international editor said:

“The following problems appear much too frequently”

• Submission of papers which are clearly out of scope
• Failure to format the paper according to the Guide for Authors
• Inappropriate (or no) suggested reviewers
• Inadequate response to reviewers
• Inadequate standard of English
• Resubmission of rejected manuscripts without revision

Paul Haddad, Editor, *Journal of Chromatography A*
Why should you publish

Publishing is essential to the scientific research process and to the advancement of knowledge. It is also necessary for career advancement.

What to Publish:

• New and original research results
• Reviews of the literature
• Editorials, commentaries, and letters to the editor
• Conference papers that advance knowledge in a certain scientific field
• Case Reports with novel insights to patient care
• Videos of new or novel techniques and results

You need a complete story told and a strong manuscript to present to the scientific community.
Multitask

• As you are doing your research be thinking ahead about the manuscript outline or meeting presentation
• Record your methods, animals, and reagents, vendors, etc as you run experiments
• As results are generated, begin to design figures and think about the best and clearest way to present your data
• Use lab meetings or other conferences to float “trial balloons” by your colleagues
• Once your “story” is complete, you can think about telling it to the world
Outline your manuscript

1. What is the question or purpose of your work? (Introduction)
2. What did you do? (Methods)
3. What did you find? (Results)
4. What does it mean? (Discussion)

Refer to the Journal’s Guide for Authors (GfA)
Follow the instructions!
Decide the most appropriate type of manuscript

- Original Research Articles
- Letters or short communications
- Review papers
Paper Types

Short Communications
- Quick and early communications of significant, original advances
- Much shorter than full articles.

Research Paper
- Standard for disseminating completed research findings
- Typically 8-10 pages, 5 figures, 25 references
- Draft and submit your paper to appropriate journal
- Good way to build a scientific research career

Review paper
- Critical synthesis of a specific research topic
- Typically 10+ pages, 5+ figures, 80 references
- Typically solicited by journal editors
- Good way to consolidate a scientific research career
Journal Selection

*It is not (only) the Impact Factor, it is (mainly) the right audience!*

Consult the Journal homepage to learn:

- Aims and scope
- Editorial Board
- Accepted types of articles
- Readership
- Current hot topics
  - go through the abstracts of recent publications

**TIP:** Articles in *your references* will likely lead you to the right journal.

**DO NOT** gamble by submitting your manuscript to more than one journal at a time.
What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?

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Language does make a difference

“It is quite depressive to think that we are spending millions in grants for people to perform experiments, produce new knowledge, hide this knowledge in a often badly written text and then spend some more millions trying to second guess what the authors really did and found.”

Amos Bairoch Nature Precedings
doi:10.1038/npre.2009.3092.1
FIRST, A SIMPLE TRUTH...

No matter how fascinating your experimental results or how intriguing your clinical observations, your work must be published if it’s going to impact science and advance the field.

Even if your discovery is brilliant, bad writing can render your findings unpublishable or delay publication until it is extensively revised.

“It’s not science until it’s published!”
Do publishers correct language?

• We don’t. It is the author’s responsibility to make sure his/her paper is in its best possible form when submitted for publication.

• Publishers often provide resources for authors.
  – Some publishers may perform technical screening prior to peer review.

NEW! Translation services
Lost in English translation? Write in your own language and get expert support. Our scientific professionals translate from eight different languages to English guaranteed within 12 days.

English language editing
Only 5 business days to have your manuscript edited in correct scientific English. Our history of scientific publishing ensures that your English is free of mistakes.
Manuscript Language – Overview

- Accurate
- Concise
- Clear
- Objective
Sentence Structure

- Write direct and short sentences
- One piece of information per sentence
- Avoid multiple statements in one sentence

Tip: Read your manuscript out loud when proofreading. You will pick up on more errors and run-on sentences.
Tenses

Present tense:
for known facts & hypotheses

Past tense:
for experiments conducted & your results
Grammar

- Use active voice to shorten sentences
- Avoid abbreviations
- Minimize use of adverbs
- Eliminate redundant phrases
- Double-check unfamiliar words or phrases
What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?

How can I ensure I am using proper manuscript language?

How do I properly build my paper?
Thought Questions

What are some characteristics of the best manuscript writing you have seen?

What is it that distinguishes a very good manuscript from a bad one?
How to develop and submit your Manuscript
What makes up a strong manuscript?

- Has a **clear**, **useful**, and **exciting** message
- Presented and constructed in a **logical** manner
- Reviewers and editors can **easily** grasp the **significance**

Make it easy on the editor and reviewers to understand your story
Research Article Structure

- Title
- Abstract
- Keywords

- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion

- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Supplementary Data

Make sure each section of the paper fulfills its purpose clearly & concisely.

Informative, attractive, effective

How do you search for a paper?

We often write in this order:
- Figures and tables
- Methods, Results and Discussion
- Conclusions and Introduction
- Abstract and title
A good title should contain the \textit{fewest} possible words that \textit{adequately} describe the content of a paper.

Effective titles
- Identify the main issue of the paper
- Begin with the subject of the paper
- Be accurate, unambiguous, specific, and complete
- Are as short as possible
Abstract

• The advertisement for your article and freely available in PubMed, Medline, Embase, SciVerse Scopus, etc

• Most important section of the article — Will be read by the most people

• Include important data (sample size, statistics) and results

• Can insert a figure or video in abstract

• Often best to write abstract last

• Make sure you cross reference with body of paper for consistency
Introduction

Introduction is especially important!

A high proportion of “lack of novelty” rejections are made after reading abstract, introduction and conclusions.

- You are telling a story. Introduction sets the scene.
- What is the purpose of your work?
- State the reason you did the study as clearly as possible
- Do not attempt to summarize the whole field (it is not possible!)
- Quote what is necessary for background and give credit to previous works.
Introduction (Continued)

• Give a clear **motivation** for the work. *Explain why before explaining how.*

• Explain what is **novel compared to** what is already available in the *literature*

• High level description of your approach. Why is it *important*? Why is it *difficult*?

• What are the *alternatives*? Why is yours *different or better*?

• What are the gaps and how are you going to fill them? At the end of the introduction the *reader knows the problem* and the *solution you propose*
Methods

Describe how the problem was studied

- Often the easiest place to start writing the papers
- Describe how the research was done
- Methods or procedures used
- Study population and demographics (if needed)
- Give enough detail for critique and replication of procedures and confirmation of results
- When using methods that have been published before, reference the publication without repeating the description
- Identify the equipment and materials used
- Manufacturer name and location should be cited with brand name product or source of cells
- Describe the statistical methods used
- IRB approval should be addressed if appropriate and state receipt of informed consent for studies using human subjects or materials
Results

• Describe your findings in a logical sequence
• Should parallel your Methods section
• Don’t repeat what you’ve already stated
• Emphasis is on the observations of your research -- NOT the implications
• Check *and recheck* your data for accuracy and consistency — make sure the numbers add up!
• Provide results of the statistical analysis
• Figures and tables are an excellent way to describe your results
Results: figures and tables

- Illustrations are critical because
  - Figures and tables are the most efficient way to present results
  - Captions and legends should be self-explanatory; figures should be able to stand alone
- *What is the take home point?*
- Maximize space; make sure final versions of figures can be easily read
- Use consistent formatting between figures
  - Plots: labels, scale and symbols
  - Micrographs: scale bar, point out key features

Results

Do not try to fit everything in!

What ends up in the paper

Your work

Slide contributed by Diego Gutierrez
Discussion

• Does not require complete review of the literature

• Place your study in context for the reader
  ▪ Why are your findings new and different?
  ▪ How are they relevant to advance the current field?
  ▪ Make the Discussion correspond to the Results. But do not reiterate the results.

• Include:
  ▪ Interpretation of results
  ▪ Compare the published results with your own
  ▪ What is the significance and implication of your work
  ▪ Briefly describe any follow up studies you are preparing
Conclusions

How the work advances the field from the present state of knowledge

• Not the same as a summary!
• Give conclusions that are supported by your results
• Try to end in a positive tone
• Do not overreach. Statements such as “this method can potentially be used…” do not belong to the conclusions (and often irritate referees)
References

Cite the main scientific publications on which your work is based

- Do not use too many references
- Always ensure you have fully absorbed material you are referencing
- Avoid excessive self-citations
- Avoid excessive citations of publications from the same region
- Conform strictly to the style given in the guide for authors
Acknowledgments

Ensures those who helped in the research are recognised

Advisors and Undergrad. Support

Financial Supporters and Funding Bodies

Proofreaders and Typists

Suppliers who may have donated materials
Cover Letter

Very important: Your chance to speak directly to the editor

• Often overlooked by authors
• You have spent months working on your paper. Do not hurry up now!
• Explain the main findings and motivation
• Highlight the novelty and significance of results
• State final approval of all co-authors
• State prior reviews, revisions, etc.
• Note special requirements
  • Referees names

State any conflicts of interest
What Editors and Publishers are looking for: what exactly happens after I submit my paper?
Peer-Review

• An essential part of the publishing process

• Helps uphold the quality and validity of the work and overall integrity of the Journal

• Article is assigned to Editor

• Editor typically assigns two or more peer-reviewers

• Reviewers are also authors, colleagues, scientists who directly contribute to the scientific literature themselves
Why do reviewers review

• Helps to ensure the rigorous standards of the scientific process
• Upholds the integrity of the journal
• Fulfills a sense of scientific obligation
• Reciprocates professional courtesy
• Establishes expertise
• Enhances personal academic accomplishments
• To stay current
Responsibilities of Reviewers

• Contribute to editorial decisions

• Promptness

• Confidentiality

• Uphold standards of objectivity

• Disclose any conflicts of interest
First Decision: “Accepted” or “Rejected”

Accepted
- Very rare, but it happens
- Congratulations!
  - Champagne for all

More often “With Revisions”
- Minor Revisions—almost there
- Major Revisions—NOT yet accepted but with complete responses to reviewers comments and suggestions may still be accepted for publication

Rejected
- Probability 40-90% ...
- Do not despair
  - It happens to everybody
- Try to understand WHY
  - Consider reviewers’ advice
  - Be self-critical
- If you submit to another journal, begin as if it were a new manuscript
  - Take advantage of the reviewers’ comments
  - They may review your manuscript for the other journal too!
  - Read the Guide for Authors of the new journal, again and again.
Common Reasons for Manuscript Revisions and Rejection

- Format not consistent with Guide for Authors
- Flawed methods or study design
- No IRB approval or exemption discussed
- Inappropriate statistical analysis
- Inconsistencies between abstract, manuscript, figures, and/or tables
- Stylistic, poor grammar, English language errors
- Unsubstantiated conclusions
What leads to acceptance???

Attention to details
Check and double check your work
Consider the reviewers’ comments
English must be as good as possible
Presentation is important
Take your time with revision
Acknowledge those who have helped you
New, original and previously unpublished
Critically evaluate your own manuscript
Ethical rules must be obeyed
Getting Your Paper Noticed

Using innovative online tools, search engine optimization and social media.
Simple but Effective

• Choose the right journal

• Make sure your abstract is crystal-clear about what and why. Don’t assume people will understand.

• Spend quality time on your conclusions and references

• Don’t forget your keywords

• Share your data and research

• Use easy to understand charts and professional illustrations to support your message.

• Use clear and correct manuscript language
80% of traffic from search engines is generated from Google…

What you can do to get your research noticed

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Use strong key words in:

- Title
- Heading / sub-headings
- Description tags
- Description of authors
- Main body text
- Abstract
- Graphics (tables & figures)

What you can do to get your research noticed
Share your knowledge!
Make your paper stand out from the crowd…

What you can do to get your research noticed
Getting Noticed

• Sharing research, accomplishments and ambitions makes you more visible
• With greater visibility, you get cited more, promote your research, and career

What you can do to get your research noticed
Let’s Recap

Readers of your article can:

1. Make fast decisions when you present your article clearly and use intuitive tools
2. Find your article more easily when you think about search engines
3. Discover your article quicker when you master social media

Before

After
Elsevier publishing campus

Designed to give researchers free access to online lectures, interactive training and professional advice on a range of topics, Publishing Campus represents a new way for Elsevier to connect meaningfully with (early career) researchers.

Elsevier Publishing Campus

Free online lectures. Interactive training courses. Expert advice. Resources to support you in publishing your world-class book or journal article. Certificates to recognize your efforts.

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Understand how to make the most of every opportunity and promote your research to your peers

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Discover new ways and train yourself for effective and efficient research skills

College of Career Planning
From starting a PhD to navigating your way to becoming a journal editor. Planning your academic career starts here

College of Recommended Organizations
A range of professional organizations supporting your career

August 2015
Metrics Overview of My Research Dashboard

**Views on SD & citation counts**

**Summary**
- 75 Views
- 64 Citations

**Publication recommender**

**Your Audience is Also Reading**

- Neadjuvant radiochemotherapy increases matrix metalloproteinase activity in healthy tissue in esophageal cancer patients
  - By Ellis, R. E., Webb, C. W., Watts, Y. W., Campbell, J. C., Jenkins, Z., J. Harrison, S. H., Harris, M. H.

**Geographic distribution**

**Publication rating**

**Article rating: 6**

**Search terms**

Within ScienceDirect, people are using the following search terms to find your article:
- User interface characteristics
- Interaction points
- Durability
- Empirical validation
- Quantify

**Mendeley readership & sharing**

- 792 Mendeley readers
- 63 Mendeley sharing

**Mendeley audience/discipline breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Mendeley Readers by Discpline</th>
<th>Mendeley Readers by Academic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Ph.D. Student: 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>Master: 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Student: 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Student (Bachelor): 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Questions

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