

“ASK THE PROFESSOR” about ... HOW TO PUBLISH AN ACADEMIC ARTICLE

Pātai: (Question)

Can you tell me what I need to know to go about the process of submitting an academic article for publication?

Professor Alison Jones replies:

Here are the main points in going about submitting an article for publication in an academic journal:

Before you begin

- You need ONE good idea or main ‘point’ – what do you have to say? (Your point can be new idea, new angle on someone else's idea, a critique of assumptions, some new information ... but it must contain one central idea. You cannot rely on data alone. What idea does the data *illustrate*?).

Where to publish?

- Be clear about your intended audience (this will determine where you publish)
- Journals in your own field: be familiar with these
- Consider the level of the journal – local, national, international; professional, academic, magazine
- Be clear about the journal requirements for writers (read the page on Notes for Contributors carefully)
- Publish where the existing writers are discussing the ideas, theories and authors you are also using.

Process

- Complete article fully (complying with all writing requirements)
- Get feedback from critical friends (you should write “Draft Only”; or “Not for Circulation”; or “Not to be Quoted” on the draft)
- Send to the journal (as per requirements on the Notes for Contributors’ information)
- Acknowledgement of receipt of your submission should come from the editor within 2 weeks
- Your article will be sent out anonymously by the editor for review to (normally) three reviewers (at this point, you can refer to your article as ‘under review’)
- You should get written feedback within 2 months (but this can vary considerably) from the editor who will have read the three reviews and made a decision in terms of the categories below. You will be sent copies of the anonymous reviews.

Reviewer feedback is typically one of four categories:

1. Publish as is
2. Publish with some modifications
3. Resubmit with revision
4. Reject (often because it does not 'fit' that journal) – may not be sent for review.

If you get a 1 (a rare editor response): Celebrate! And write to say thank you.

If you get a 2 (a common editor response):

- Respond immediately to confirm you will be making the changes
- Make the modifications as soon as possible
- Write a covering letter referring to each comment from the reviewer where change has been requested, indicating which comments you have followed and which you have not, and why
- The article might not be sent out to reviewers again
- Do not argue with reviewers; always be polite, and clear about why you have made the changes you have.

If you get a 3 (a very common editor response):

- Decide whether you want to rewrite and resubmit to that journal (this will most likely depend on the quality and nature of the feedback you receive; if you do not relate to the feedback at all, it may be worth considering a different journal)
- If you decide to revise and resubmit, do this as soon as possible. DO NOT leave the article alone to rot away in your computer files
- Send in the revised article with a covering letter indicating how you have addressed (or not) the reviewers' concerns
- Or else send the revised article to another journal. You do not need to inform the other journal of your article's journey to that point.

If you get a 4 (a sadly common editor response):

Do not despair. *Rejection is part of academic life.* Get used to it quickly. Revise the article, send to a critical friend for feedback, and then send elsewhere. DO NOT GIVE UP. Someone will want it once it is improved! Do this as soon as possible. The worst thing is to let the article go 'cold'.

Finally ... publication

- You will be sent page proofs to check (usually electronically)
- Check these immediately (they usually demand a 2-day turnaround)
- Revisions must be minor at this stage, with no 'bits' added in or taken out
- Editors may have additional questions for you to respond to
- Once you have the page numbers of your article you can deem it 'published' for your CV. Between notification of acceptance and getting the page numbers, it can be referred to as 'in press'.

Other points to remember

- You may have some good data or a good idea, but excellent quality writing is crucial
- Always send in the highest quality copy. Get your work carefully proof-read, and get comments from critical friends.
- Follow proper etiquette: you must *not* submit the same article to more than one journal at any one time (this is different for book manuscripts or proposals)
- Beware of being a double-dipper. Do not get the reputation for re-writing the same article very slightly differently for two or more publications, simply to boost your cv length.
- You may consider republishing an article by re-working it for a very different audience (for instance, write the article for an international publication, then re-write for a local, professional magazine). You may take a different emphasis or perspective; you may even use the same data with a different interpretation. If you are not sure about whether you are 'double-dipping', seek advice from the editor.

- Discuss with your supervisor, if you are a student, the benefits and problems of publishing as you write your doctorate
- If you are co-authoring an article, agree to author order and appearance *early on in the process*. Arguments about authorship can become quite unpleasant otherwise. It is usually the first author who gets most kudos...
- Beware of thieves! Protect your intellectual property. Unfortunately, some people's ideas do get stolen and published by others. Just be a bit careful and get advice from someone you trust if this is a concern.

GOOD LUCK with your publishing!

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