How to get your journal article published

Before you submit

Standards are high and getting published is not easy, but there are certain things to consider which can improve your success rate when trying to get an article published in a Sage journal. This document sets out handy tips on what to consider before you submit your paper to a journal.

Why should you consider publication?

- You have a contribution to make – i.e., the conventional wisdom is mistaken; your work extends a theory or fills a gap; your work is novel or innovative.
- It is important for your career.
- Publication is integral to the academic's role.
- Questions to ask yourself: Who's going to be interested? How does it build on what we already know? How significant is your message? How sure are you of your findings? Is this novel, innovative work? Are you filling a gap or extending a theory? Are you showing how conventional wisdom was mistaken?

High- vs. low-risk submissions

- High-risk submissions: a conversion of a big report or monograph, a paper that has been previously published elsewhere, a paper that is 30% over or under the recommended word count, or a paper that does not fall in line with the journal's focus.
- Low-risk submissions: papers written for the journal, i.e., that fit with the genre and scope of the journal, engage with the debates, and/or refer to previous work published in the journal and related publications.

What should you consider when choosing a journal?

- Does your research fit the journal's aims and scope, and subject area?
- What types of submissions does the journal accept?
- Does the journal have a good reputation in the field? Are the Editor and Editorial Board high profile?
- What journals do you read and cite often? Could they be good fits for your paper?
- What are the journal's key metrics? Is the journal indexed in Journal Citation Reports, Scopus, or elsewhere?
- Does your institution have any restrictions on where you can submit articles?
- What is the journal's acceptance/rejection rate and publication speed?
- Who reads the journal? Will they be interested in your research?

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How to select a journal

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Predatory journals

If you're publishing open access, be on the lookout for predatory publishers. Predatory companies take advantage of the crowded open access environment to launch journals with highly questionable practices. Some predatory titles list entirely fabricated editorial boards on their websites. Others might go further by listing real academics without their knowledge or consent. "Pay to Publish" journals conduct little to no peer review and will accept any manuscript so long as the author is willing to pay the fee. Some predatory publishers even mimic existing, high-quality peer-reviewed journals, even down to the journal logo.

To avoid predatory publishers, look for inclusion in indexes (Scopus, PubMed, DOAJ), alignment with publishers, verifiable editorial board members, Creative Commons (or similar) licenses, transparency about author guidelines and policies, and check hyperlinks.

Let us help...

Sage offers two different services for authors – Sage Path and our Journal Recommender.

Sage Path is an article transfer service that connects previously overlooked manuscripts with other journals. If your research is deemed out of scope for a particular title, it can be passed over to our team, reviewed, and matched with a more appropriate publication from our database, or you can submit directly if you need help finding new journal options.

The **Sage Journal Recommender** is a search tool that will help you find a journal based on the subject and content of your manuscript. Enter keywords and the title of your manuscript to search over 1,000 Sage journals and compare those most relevant for your research.

Tips before submitting

- Read the journal's aims and scope.
- Read the journal's articles and Table of Contents (TOCs) on the **Sage Journals website** to familiarize yourself with the content.
- Consult with colleagues.
- Discuss your paper with the journal editor, if appropriate.
- Beware of predatory publishers.

What should you do to prepare your manuscript?

- Read the **manuscript submission guidelines**. The Sage website hosts manuscript submission guidelines for all Sage journals.
- Make every effort to improve the quality of the manuscript before submission, ensuring the research is complete and the manuscript is well-written.
- Be as objective as possible about your work.
- Include your submission funding, conflict of interest, and ethics statements.

Find out more at
Sage Journals Information for Authors

Sage Journals

Manuscript submission guidelines checklist should include the following golden rules

- Have you used the right referencing style, e.g., Harvard, APA, Vancouver, or Chicago?
- Have you stayed within the word limit?
- Have you formatted your article (and all included tables, figures, etc.) correctly?
- Have you ensured there are no identifying features in your manuscript (to best facilitate anonymized peer review)?
- Have you conformed to the conventions of academic writing?
  - **title, abstract, and keywords** – please refer to the information on how best to title your article, write your abstract and select your keywords by visiting **Sage's guidelines** on how to help readers find your article online;
  - introduction with a clear, compelling statement of purpose;
  - conceptual grounding/literature review;
  - hypotheses/research questions that are clear, meaningful, answerable, inter-related, and flow logically from the introduction;
  - methodology, appropriate sample, procedures/measures that offer enough information for replicability/trust;
  - analysis and discussion – should be systematic and sensible;
  - **tables and figures** that enhance comprehension;
  - results, discussion of results, and key findings;
  - conclusion: don't merely repeat results, include directives of research and practice and awareness of limitations, but don't go beyond the evidence.
- Has permission been obtained for use of copyrighted material from other sources (including the Web)?
- Have you proofread your manuscript before submitting?
- Have you provided a **cover letter**? Keep it short, including all the basic data, highlighting how it is relevant to the journal, and how your research is of importance.
- Have you considered including supplemental data? Will it add value to the content?
- Have you adhered to all forms of publication ethics, including listing authors and acknowledgments and disclosing any conflicts of interest?
- If you are publishing **Open Access, or Gold Open Access**, have you confirmed how you will secure funding for your article processing charge? Have you considered any discounts or waivers that may apply to you?
- If you have used AI in the process of writing your article, have you reviewed our **assistive and generative AI guidelines for authors** and carefully checked any AI generated content for plagiarism, accuracy, and bias? Have you acknowledged any AI content, and written a disclosure detailing your AI usage?

When you think it is ready and you have ticked off the above checklist, submit your article. Is there an online submission process or should it be sent directly to the editor or managing editor? Visit your chosen journal's homepage and click on the manuscript submission guidelines link.

Further reading

Atkinson Jennie (2019) Thinking of Publishing in a Journal Published by SAGE? Social Science Space. **https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2019/01/thinking-of-publishing-in-a-journal-published-by-sage**

Martín Eloísa (2014) How to write a good article. Current Sociology 62(7) 949-955

Becker L and Denicolo P (2012) Publishing Journal Articles, Sage Publishing

Kitchin R and Fuller D (2005) The Academic's Guide to Publishing, Sage Publishing

Epstein D, Kenway J and Boden R (2007) Writing for Publication, Sage Publishing

Questions reviewers will be asking, from 'Peer Review: Nuts and Bolts' by Sense about Science (2017): **peer-review-the-nuts-and-bolts.pdf**

Publication ethics for editors and authors: **publicationethics.org**

How to Get Published Webinar – **How to Write a Journal Article** (2022)

Find out more at
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