



How to recognize fraudulent emails



Practice the pause

We understand the desire to publish your research quickly. By this point, your paper may have been in the peer review process for months and now it's finally in the home stretch. You then get this urgent email, asking you to pay for an article processing charge or acceptance fee or another type of invoice. Maybe the email is asking if you'd like to pay to fast track your article, in order to get it out more quickly. Don't panic when requested to carry out a process urgently. It is unlikely that any journals published by any legitimate publisher would request payment for something such as speeding up a paper's review. Placing any kind of urgency on your action should immediately raise a red flag. Check with the individual via phone or through the manuscript submission platform to confirm they sent this request. Look for the phone number or email on the official journal website. Dig into the request further. Maybe the group is asking for payment; if so, check the submission guidelines or journal website. Does that journal website state that there are fees associated with the submission? Do they offer expedited peer review? Some journals do ask for a submission fee or apply page charges, but those will be outlined explicitly in the author guidelines. Ethical journals are transparent in their processes.



Hover over hyperlinks and URLs

Before you click on any link, hover your mouse over the URL and see if the text of the link in the email body matches the link address of the site to which you will be directed. Is it the same? Does the website use a secure certificate (SSL), e.g. "https"? Do these links seem to be related to the Journal website, society website, and/or manuscript submission website, if applicable?



Examine spelling and grammar

One red flag will be grammar and spelling errors. Are numerous words misspelled? Does the author of the email use poor grammar or have an unusually laudatory tone? These could be signs that the group reaching out is predatory.



Research logos

Does the acceptance letter or email have logos included? If so, do they seem to match the appropriate society, indexes, journal website or are they for something else? See if anything looks off with these logos. Is the journal affiliated with the listed society? If the letter includes a logo for the DOAJ, check whether the journal is indexed with the DOAJ. Is the logo clear, not pixelated and suggesting it was reproduced from a second source?



Verify the email address

We recommend corresponding directly through the manuscript submission system, but we know this is not always possible. Sometimes messages need to be exchanged outside the platform. Look carefully at the email address from which the group is mailing. Does it match previous emails with whom you were corresponding prior? Look closely to see if a zero was changed to an "O" or if gmail.com transitioned to yahoo.com. Compare any emails available in the author submission guidelines. Within the email body itself, see if there is an official signature with a valid physical address and/or phone number of an organization.