

AGORA Workshop
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HOW TO PUBLISH ON A SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL?

10 steps to publish your research results on
a good science journal



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(from a lecture by G.Anania
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1. You have discussed your PhD thesis: now the work is starting!

In some PhD schools the thesis is based on 2-4
papers published (or accepted) in journals with
peer reviewers =

a general introduction or/and a chapter linking
the papers in a logical framework + a copy of
the papers



But normally you have a long text that needs to be
re-organized for a scientific publication:

- ... reducing the length
- ... focusing on one of few innovative aspects
- ... and so, changing the overall structure of the document

Normally:

- much research is done,
- some is successful,
- less is written up,
- only part could be published,
- and only a small proportion will be read.



So you **need to target your writing and publishing** to
maximize the chances of someone reading it and
making use of your findings.

Try to have an objective, accurate and honest evaluation of your thesis

(easy to say, difficult to do!)

How to know if part of your thesis can be published?

- ask **your supervisor**
- refer to the evaluation made by the **PhD Commission or reviewer(s)**
- take note of the **comments** made during the presentation(s)

What can I publish?

- the **literature review?** (not easy)
- the **methodological approach?**
- the **problem, research question?**
- the **results (and discussion)?**

Frequent statements of scope in the
journals: *we are looking for **significant
results** or papers reporting a
significant advance in knowledge =
first questions that the editors of the
journal will ask themselves*

2. Where to publish?

- The choice of journal will influence the format and style of your article: different journals have different styles and different rules of presentation for the material they publish.
- This is a decision to be taken **before preparing the paper**, not after!
- Young people = high expectations → high quality journals
 - Lot of readers, high reputation (for you and your working group)
- But...
 - Lot of time needed
 - High risks to have your manuscript refused (frustration)

Journals in the field of agricultural and forest economics

(with their 2007 IF; *ranking* among 191 journal on economic issues in ISI DB)

- ...
- 40. ERAE (1.271)
- 50. Food Policy (1.056)
- 53. Land Economics (1.042)
- 54. AJAE (1.034)
- 56. JAE (1.000)
- 80. J of Forestry Econ (0.759)
- 100. Australian J of ARE (0.635)
- 102. AE (0.603)
- ...

Where I find information on the journals in one scientific sector and their Impact Factor?

ISI Web of Knowledge

<http://admin-apps.isiknowledge.com/JCR/JCR?PointOfEntry=Home&SID=U2OINAoB@98ICibngOO>



Rank	Abbreviated Journal Title	ISSN	Year	Citations	Cited	Cites per Document	Eigenfactor	Impact Factor
1	Journal of the American Medical Association	0000-9877	2007	100000	10000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
2	Journal of the American Chemical Society	0002-7875	2007	80000	8000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
3	Journal of the American Statistical Association	0162-1454	2007	60000	6000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
4	Journal of the American Psychological Association	0002-9094	2007	50000	5000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
5	Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association	0002-7770	2007	40000	4000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
6	Journal of the American Optometric Association	0002-7081	2007	30000	3000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
7	Journal of the American Dental Association	0002-7081	2007	20000	2000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
8	Journal of the American Pharmacological Association	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
9	Journal of the American Society of Nephrology	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
10	Journal of the American Society of Hypertension	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
11	Journal of the American Society of Geriatrics	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
12	Journal of the American Society of Internal Medicine	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
13	Journal of the American Society of Pathology	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
14	Journal of the American Society of Radiology	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
15	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
16	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
17	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
18	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
19	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000
20	Journal of the American Society of Podiatry	0002-7081	2007	10000	1000	10.0	0.0000	10.0000

The largest abstract and citation database for high quality scientific journal: SCOPUS
(now >90% overlapping with Web of Science)



<http://www.scopus.com>

The first 5 science publishers in the world

MAS Publisher	No of Jnls (2009)
Elsevier	2148
Springer	1654
Wiley-Blackwell	1293
Taylor & Francis Informa	1281
Sage	323
Wolters Kluwer	277
IEEE	247
Oxford University Press	230
Cambridge University Press	207
BioMed Central	165

3. Now write the paper, starting (almost) from zero

First rule: follow carefully the editorial rules and submission procedures (normally available on line)



E.g.: The Development Economies - Wiley

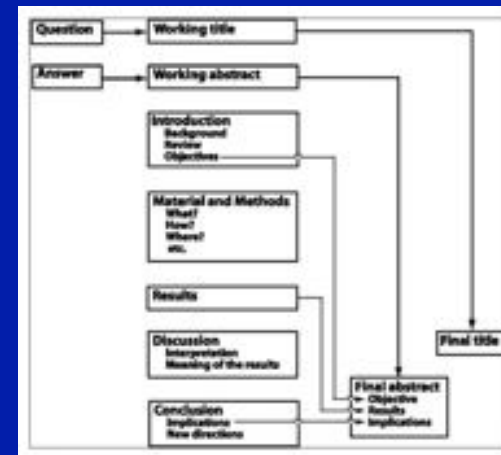


Check the structure of your paper

The structure of a scientific paper is not the same as in a thesis!

Section heading	Answering the questions:
Introduction	What led to the work and what are my objectives?
Materials	What did I use?
Methods	What did I do?
Results	What happened?
Discussion	What does it mean?
Conclusions	What are the implications?
Acknowledgements	Who helped?
References	Who have I referred to in the text?

Steps in writing your paper



Source: Stapleton et al., 2004

A basic rule: max length

Oh no, your paper exceeds the maximum number of pages allowed! What do you do??

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR KEEPING YOUR PAPER WITHIN THE PAGE LIMIT

Shrink font size to limits of human perception
If a minimum font size is imposed, use a font that is 0.2pt smaller. They won't notice, will they?

Take out excessive details of your methodology
Let's face it, nobody really cares (and if they do, why help your competition?)

Border size Rule-of-thumb:
If there is paper exposed, it can be filed (Nature, and other journals, allow a various submission). If limit exists, apply 0.2pt rule.

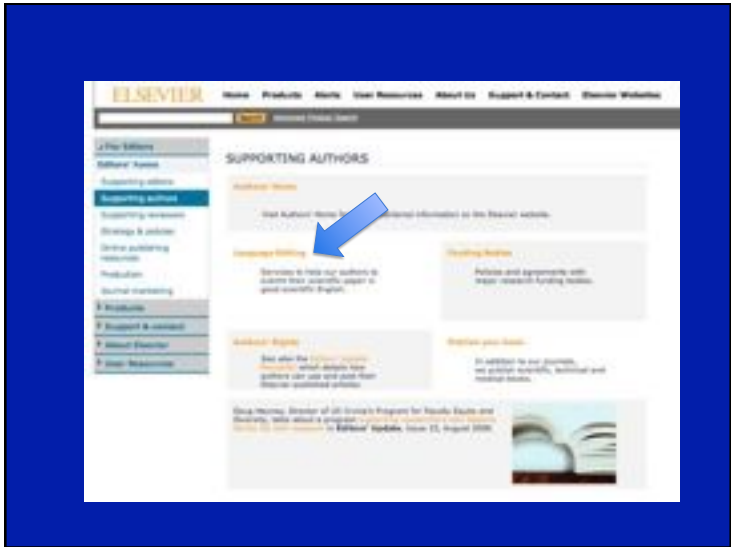
Use Max. Abbrev. in Ref. Sec.
Spelling out the journal names will only make it easy for people to look up your competitors' papers.

Rewrite entire paper to make it more concise and easier to understand
Yeah right. Prodigious verbiage establishes your superior intelligence. Also, who has the time?

JRASC, Oct 2007
www.PRS-COMICS.COM

4. Language editing

- If your English is decent, **it's better to write directly the manuscript in English** (it's a learning exercise!)
- Always ask for a revision by a **professional translator** (or a mother tongue scientist)
- Many editors provide information on **language editing services** (sometimes a reduced costs for scientists from DCs)
- A common best practices: in research organizations **costs for language editing** for manuscript prepared by PhD students or young scientists are fully covered by the institution



5. Suggestions

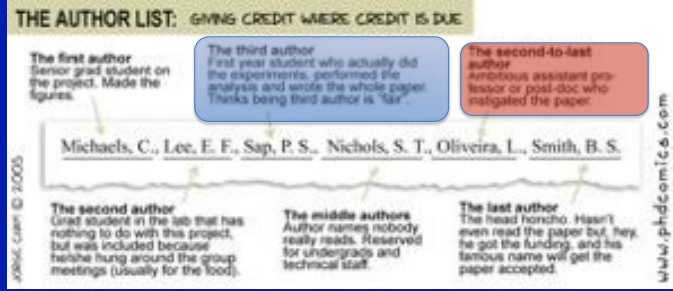
- Try to organize a **seminar** and to involve as many competent scientists as possible to have their comments on your draft paper. Try also to present your paper in a **workshop or congress**
- Take advantage of the **pre-submission option made available by some Editors**
- Some journals, in the submission phase, ask the author to suggest a **peer reviewer**: not your supervisor (but maybe one of his friends...), that person met in a congress, a person that knows your study area/country, ...
- Make sure that you have a good system to **track and save** the different versions of the manuscript and of the correspondence. Make sure you have a **backup copy**.

Suggestions (2/3)

- **Check the bibliography** (← Refworks, Endnote, ...):
 - References can be quickly checked with Google Scholar (it contains many mistakes!)
 - Have a look to papers published by the members of the editorial committee and those published by the journal on the same topic
 - Don't forget to refer to the papers of the "big potatoes"
- A common (very serious) mistake: cut and paste sentences from papers and books without quoting them. **Plagiarism** is not only a good reason to have you paper rejected, but it is an illegal act!
- Acknowledgments: **don't forget any person or institution** (this is also a mean to show that you had relevant and appropriate input to your work!)

Suggestions (3/3)

- Co-authors: if you are a un-known researcher, it may be useful to include as a co-author a **well known and authoritative scientist**
- **Credit** should in this case clearly defined and reported
- Be aware you your **copyrights**



5. OK, now I submit the paper! (NO! ...please wait)

- Ask an **experienced colleague to read** your paper and make comments with no limitations

... not so easy: good scientists (who can make good comments) have many things to do, and your paper is not a priority task

- **Read again your paper after some days:** you can be sure you will find something that can be improved

7. The Journal is not replying ... what can I do? Do I write?

- **Wait at last 6 months!**
- If you do not receive a letter from the publishers within six months, you should write kindly asking them to confirm that they received the manuscript and **the state of the review process**
- **After 12 months** you are allowed to make a clear-cut request, asking for a time schedule in your manuscript revision

8. Results of the review: addressing reviewers' comments



1. **Your paper has been accepted!**

- ... forget it (very rare condition for a young scientist)

2. **Your paper has been accepted with minor changes to be done**

... congratulations! Your revision work will be easy and quick

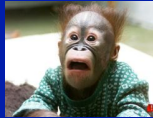
3. **"Revise and resubmit"**: the paper has not been accepted in the present version but, if you change it in accordance with the reviewers' comments, the journal is willing to re-consider it. This is the most frequent case.

Is it **a good or bad news?**

... you have to consider it as a good news, if the reviewers are asking you **reasonable changes** and adaptations

4. Your paper has not been accepted

- They write you to send the manuscript to a “more appropriate” journal



- Read the comments and ask yourself why?
 - reviewers **didn't understand anything** (do I need to write to the Editor? This is possible, but remember to be always humble and objective)
 - reviewers are **substantially right**: my work is not of high scientific quality. I tried, but I was not lucky
 - reviewers are right, but **I still can work** on the manuscript ...

... and you try with another journal

ADDRESSING REVIEWER COMMENTS BAD REVIEWS ON YOUR PAPER? FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES AND YOU MAY YET GET IT PAST THE EDITOR

<p>Reviewer comment: “The method/ device/ paradigm the authors propose is clearly wrong.”</p> <p>How NOT to respond: ✗ “Yes, we know. We thought we could still get a paper out of it. Sorry.”</p> <p>Correct response: ✓ “The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, as the focus of this work is exploratory and not performance-based, validation was not found to be of critical importance to the contribution of the paper.”</p>	<p>Reviewer comment: “The authors fail to reference the work of Smith et al., who solved the same problem 20 years ago.”</p> <p>How NOT to respond: ✗ “I hate. We didn't think anybody had read that. Actually, their solution is better than ours.”</p> <p>Correct response: ✓ “The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, our work is based on completely different first principles (we use different variable names), and has a much more attractive graphical user interface.”</p>	<p>Reviewer comment: “This paper is poorly written and scientifically unconvincing. I do not recommend it for publication.”</p> <p>How NOT to respond: ✗ “You #@\$% reviewer! I know who you are! I'm gonna get you when it's my turn to review!”</p> <p>Correct response: ✓ “The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, we feel the reviewer did not fully comprehend the scope of the work, and misjudged the results based on incorrect assumptions.”</p>
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www.phdcomics.com

9. ...“revise and resubmit”

- Probably the **most boring and more frustrating** part of your work as a young scientist (...but, often, the **most useful**)
- Your target: **make the Editor and the reviewers happy!**
- **All the suggestions and criticism have to be accepted?**
- no, but if you don't accept some suggestions you need to motivate your decision → write clear (very kind) explanatory notes to your reviewers or to the Editor

- Sometimes the Editor is making a distinction between the **most relevant mistakes** and the minor ones.
- Take into consideration the **Editor's comments and suggestions**: they are the more important ones (and at the end the Editor has the last word...)
- If some of the comments or requests are not clear, you are allowed to write to the Editor and **ask for clarifications**

10. Check carefully the proofs!

After all the time spent in preparing and revising your paper, it's a pity if you find some stupid mistakes in your printed work

"A random check of 300 references in six medical journals showed that 15% of them misquoted the original author's name. So do not be so confident that the reference you copied out of a journal months ago is right. Go back and check it!"
Source: Stapleton et al., 2004

... and now,
it's your turn...

