

How to get Published in Scholarly Journals: The Art, Science and Skill of Article Writing

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Outline of this Workshop

- Academic writing: A brief overview (K)
- Why publish & why psychologists do not publish? (K)
- Different kinds of academic writing / types of articles (A)
- Writing tips for new writers; do's & don'ts (A)
- Choosing a journal & preparing for submission (K)
- Why articles get rejected & dealing with rejection (A)
- Ethics in reporting & publishing (K)



Workshop questions

- What do you want to get out of this workshop?
- Why do you want to publish?
- What are the obstacles you face in publishing?
- What types of articles would you like to write?
- Why do you think manuscripts get rejected?



Q. 1

*What do you want to get
out of this workshop?*



Academic writing: A brief overview



About academic writing

Academic writing can never be objective. It is biased (gendered, raced, classed) and, therefore, potentially discriminatory in many ways.



- Remember that the hallmark of good scientific and academic writing is modesty and tentativeness.
- Acknowledge that you may be wrong in terms of theory, findings, conclusions and so on.
- Do not use strong words such as ‘definitely’, ‘absolutely’, ‘always’, ‘never’ and ‘must’.



Pivotal elements of sought-after manuscripts...



- Unique selling point
- Meta-analyses
- Development of new instruments



What makes your contribution significant? (Jansen, 2012)

- Worthwhileness
- Recognising the class of problems within which your research topic falls
- The capacity to articulate an independent argument



What makes your contribution significant? (Jansen, 2012)

- Recognising the limitations of existing research enables researcher to justify a new departure
- The ability to make the justificatory claim in writing
- Knowing what leading thinkers in your field believe is significant in that area of research



OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED

Attendees should be able to ...

1. decide why they should/ could engage in scholarly writing/ publication
2. determine (and unravel!) personal constraints on scholarly publishing
3. engage in “hands-on” experiences with works-in-progress to improve their scholarly writing
4. get published



PARTICIPANT CONTRACT

I promise to ...

1. work as hard as might (sometimes even through the night) be necessary to complete articles
2. share with colleagues my “work-in-progress”



THREE QUESTIONS THAT SHAPE ACADEMIC WRITING

1. What is your broad research focus and purpose?
2. What are your i. rationale, ii. research questions, iii. hypotheses and iv. working assumptions?
3. What is your intended research methodology? (How will you obtain data (information))?



ACADEMIC WRITING

Cannot occur without ...

- research-based data;
- scholarly reading;
- scholarly self-discipline, organization, dedication and application (10 000 hour rule).



Why publish & why psychologists do not publish?



Q.2

Why do you want to publish?



Why publish?

-
-
-
-



Why publish?

Constructing an identity

- I will write articles so that I can ...
- and in the process I may...



Why publish?

- I am expected to (career-related) E
- Recognition E
- Personal growth I
- Making a contribution to scholarship I
- Developing a profile (identity) I



Why do you not publish?

-
-
-
-
-
-



Why do academics not publish in general?

- Fear (of criticism)
- Insufficient time
- It is not important to me
- Too much on my plate already
- I cannot write well
- My lecture load is too heavy



Q.3

*What are the obstacles
you face in publishing?*



Different types of Academic Writing



Q. 4

*What types of articles
would you like to write?*



Types of Academic Writing

- Books / chapters in books
- Journal articles
 - Research-based articles
 - Theoretical / literature reviews
 - Case reports



Research-based articles

- Reports on research investigations
- Quantitative or qualitative research
- Given preference in many journals



Purpose of research-based articles

- Documents what you did
- Documents how you did it
- Documents what you found
- Concise & to the point !!!
- Main purpose is sharing your findings
- Waffle-less



Format: Research-based articles

- Introduction
- Literature review
 - Theoretical review
- Method
 - Sample / participants
 - Instruments
 - Procedure
 - Ethical issues
 - Analytic procedures / statistics



Format: Research-based articles

- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusions
 - Recommendations
- References
- Tables, graphs, figures
- Acknowledgements



Theoretical / literature reviews

- Reviews of significant issues in the field
- Systematic reviews
- Thorough surveillance of the relevant literature
- Critical appraisal of findings
- Critical analysis of state of the science



Case Reports

- Only certain journals publish case reports (i.e. more clinically-oriented journals)
- Criteria: (1) Unusual cases
(2) Cases that teach something
(3) Must be theoretically grounded



Writing tips for new writers: Some do's & don'ts



Authorship

- Who are the authors ?
- What is the author order ?
- When do you decide ?
- How do you decide ?



Mentorship

- Who is a mentor ?
- Role of the mentor
- Does every new author need a mentor ?
- When do you consult your mentor ?



Writing Tips for New Writers

- Manuscript title
- Write clearly
- Don't rely on the spell-check
- Write concisely – use short sentences
- Woolly, unclear writing will (should) be rejected
- Paragraph appropriately
- Write in the third person *mostly* (especially in research-based articles)



Writing Tips for New Writers

- Read research articles in premier journals & emulate writing the style
- Contextualize your work
- Use standard headings (where possible)
- Present the material systematically
 - Use subheadings – but not too many
- Proof-read
- Have the manuscript read by experienced colleagues / mentors



Writing Tips for New Writers

- Examine previous articles in that journal for style / format



Reviewing the Literature

- Do a thorough literature review
- Examine the latest literature
- But don't try to include all of that in the paper
- Don't review literature like in a dissertation
- Review only the most relevant issues & concepts



Writing the Theoretical / Literature Review

- First develop a skeleton
- Map out the broad areas / themes
- Under each decide what must be covered
- Based on your readings, put the ‘flesh’ onto the skeleton



Remember ...

- A literature review is *not* merely a collection of quotes and information about earlier research
- The review *must* have an evaluative edge
- The available literature & findings *must* be critiqued
- The review *must* be pointed and related to your work



Do's

- *Critically* review literature
- Note the flaws in previous studies
- Comment on why results of various studies differed or are the same
- Review the *latest* literature
- Write clearly
- Cite original sources !!
- Use only scientific / academic sources (i.e. journals, academic texts, etc)



Don'ts

- Plagiarize !!
- Simply describe what is happening in the field
- Summarize what others have said
- Cite outdated reference source, unless for *historical* significance
- Arbitrarily cite literature without a plan
- Cite only those studies that agree with your view



Writing the Methodology

- Relate method clearly
 - so reader knows exactly what was done
 - conveys and ‘honesty’ in the method
 - so study can be replicated



Writing tips for new writers

- Avoid exaggerated or intensive writing style
- Present Results clearly & systematically
- Use tables where necessarily
- Present statistical findings knowingly
- Discuss the findings systematically
- Relate findings to research reviewed
- Give your *considered* explanations for the findings



Writing tips for new writers

- Formulate clear conclusions
- Support every claim you make
- Use a reference manager e.g. Endnote
- Write for anonymous review



What are reviewers looking for?

- Appropriate for the journal
- Well written – good grammar & formatting
- Professional / psychological language
- Thorough literature / theoretical review
- Appropriate research design
- Contributes to knowledge
- Implications for policy / practice
- Referencing – latest, relevant, technically correct



What are reviewers looking for?

- Is this a novice author?
- Over-interpretation
- Objectivity
- Critical thinking
- Can you see another side to the argument
- Proficiency in the statistical issues
- That you are a researcher & not a campaigner
- Ethical problems



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission

- Status of journal (recognized, accredited)
- Level of journal (rejection rates)
- Journal orientation (e.g., quantitative versus qualitative versus multi-method orientation)
- Organization of journal (e.g., research section and opinion/perspectives section)



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission

- Purpose of article identified in the key verb (e.g. investigate)
- Purposes of stages in the argument also in verbs: assess, vindicate, explain, establish
- Match between aim, at the start of article, and claim at the end of article?
- Link words at the start of paragraphs and sentences?
- Is a logical flow obvious?



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission

- Employ tentative modality: Cannot claim anything: article can contribute to a resolution of issues; not PROVE anything
- “Academic humility”: Qualification at the end: “Not a panacea ... not in itself new ... part of the solution” (Murray, 2005)



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission

- Role of critical readers
- Kinds of critical readers
- Language editor's role?



Choosing a journal & preparing for submission

- Analyse journal
- Contacting the editor
- What is acceptable?
- Select a number of working titles?



Additional issues

- Online Submissions
- Be aware of page fees



Why articles get rejected & dealing with rejection



Editorial & Review Response

Possible responses from the Editor:

- Submit elsewhere
- Accept as is
- Revise & Resubmit, without further review (subject to editor's satisfaction)
- Revise & Resubmit, with further review
- Reject



Q. 5

*Why do you think
manuscripts get rejected ?*



Why articles get rejected (or returned for major revision)

- Not appropriate for the particular journal
- Methodologically unsound
- Too light-weight
- Statistical analysis problems
- Interpretive errors
- Poorly written, poor grammar, ...



Why articles get rejected (or returned for major revision)

- Lack of clarity – woolly
- What contribution is it making?
- Not contextualising your work
- Too much info – diffuse & vague
- Poorly formatted
- Logical flow absent



Why articles get rejected (or returned for major revision)

- Don't submit shoddy work, hoping the flaws won't be noticed ("I've got nothing to lose")



Dealing with rejection

- What does it mean to have an article ‘rejected’ –
 - for the author ?
- Feelings evoked by the rejection
 - sadness
 - anger
 - hurt
- Working through the feelings



Rejected author or article ?

- What does it mean to have an article ‘rejected’
 - for the article?
- Is it the end of the article / idea?
- Can anything be learned from the reviews?



Dealing with rejection

- Read through the review reports
- Take a couple of days to digest the news
- Then look carefully at the reasons
- How serious are the issues of concern ?
- Can the issues be rectified ?
- Is it possible to fix & submit elsewhere ?



Revise & Resubmit, with further review

- Means the editor & reviewers have serious concerns (could still be rejected)
- But they believe the article can be salvaged
- If they have faith in your manuscript, then you should too
- Get an understanding of where the problems lie



Revise & Resubmit, with further review

- Make a list of the problems
- Make each change as requested & add references – this impresses the reviewers
- Ensure the changes don't break the flow of the manuscript
- Keep a record of what you did, where & for which review comment – to send to editor
- Revise to improve !



Revise & Resubmit, without further review

- Means the problems are not severe
- Identify & list all the areas of difficulty
- Carefully go through each one and decide how you will address the problem
- Make each change as requested & add references
- Record changes in cover letter to editor
- Use the opportunity to make the article even better than the reviewers projected



Ethics in reporting & publishing



Ethics in reporting & publishing

- A. Fundamental principles of research publishing: Providing the building blocks to the matrix of human knowledge
- B. The core rules of editors
- C. The indispensable functions of peer reviewers



Ethics in reporting & publishing

- The reported findings and/or conceptual insights must be original
- Manuscript should be considered for possible publication only if not under consideration by another journal



Ethics in reporting & publishing

- Reports must contain sufficient detail on the methods and materials to permit replication
- No inconsistent data are omitted or fabricated data presented
- Statistical treatment of data must be thorough and conclusions reasonable
- The existing relevant literature must be appropriately and fairly cited



Ethics in reporting & publishing

- Authorship must conform to the notions of responsibility and credit
- Inclusion in the authorship listing only of persons who have contributed directly to the production of the work at intellectual/ conceptual level
- Speculative deductions and postulations must be clearly specified and kept to a minimum
- Acknowledgement of funding sources and possible conflict of interest



Ethics in reporting & publishing: The core role of editors

- Large or small editorial teams in charge of the production of particular journal,
- constituted for responsible and fair editorial oversight, exercised to ensure that
- an editorial policy exists and is accessible to authors
- submitted manuscripts are carefully examined with a view to the selection of appropriate peer reviewers



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