

Description

As a researcher, should you be conducting research or worrying about formatting your paper as per your target journal's guidelines? And these formats are not universal. Every journal has its own set of technical and formatting requirements that it follows to maintain its publishing standards. Researchers like you, who work day in and day out of laboratories to conduct research and eventually publish it, often find it difficult to keep up with the unique styling and formatting process of every journal. Because of this, editors and publishers have been receiving pleas from researchers to simplify the manuscript preparation process. To ease this onerous process of formatting and re-formatting in lieu of doing something more productive in research, several journals have now adopted free-format submissions.

To understand this concern raised by the authors, Elsevier's Research and Academic Relations department conducted a survey in 2012 and found that one in three authors find the manuscript preparation and formatting process arduous and time-consuming. With this blog post, let's learn more about free format submissions and how are journals adopting them.

What Is Free Format Submission?

Free format submission refers to a type of submission process in which there are no specific guidelines or restrictions on the format of the submitted work. The content can be presented in any manner deemed suitable by the author, allowing for greater creativity and flexibility in the presentation.

Unlike traditional journal submissions, free format submissions allow authors to present their research in a manner that best suits their writing style, research method, and findings. While journals may allow free format submissions, authors are still expected to provide all information necessary for peer review (e.g., author list and contact information, main text, tables and figures, and references). Furthermore, consistent presentation of the text is mandatory (e.g., not mixing American and British spelling, applying uniform section headings, and selecting a single font type) and so is the use of a uniform referencing style (e.g., author-year, superscripted numbers, or numbers within brackets).

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Although free format journal submissions provide authors with more freedom in their submissions, they also require careful planning and attention to detail. As the format of the submission is not predetermined, authors must take care to ensure that their submissions are professional, well-organized, and easily readable, in order to maximize their chances of acceptance.

What Are the Benefits of Free Format Submissions?

Free format journal submissions have several benefits for authors and readers alike. They provide authors with the opportunity to present their research in a unique and innovative way, which can help increase the visibility and impact of their work. They also allow authors to convey their research more effectively, as they can use multimedia elements to supplement their writing and clarify complex concepts.

For readers, free format journal submissions provide a more engaging and interactive reading experience, as they can access multimedia elements, interact with interactive figures and tables, and explore the research in a more dynamic way. This can also lead to a better understanding of the research, as well as a more enjoyable and memorable reading experience.

What Elements of a Manuscript Are Included in a Free Format Submission?

Free format submissions typically cover all aspects of a manuscript, including the layout, style, formatting, and structure. The focus is on the content and quality of the work rather than specific guidelines for presentation.

In a free format submission, the author is given the freedom to choose the method of presentation that they feel best showcases their work. However, authors are expected to include the abstract, keywords, introduction, materials & methods, results, conclusions, artwork/tables with captions, and all other requirements to support their research argument. Conflicts of interest disclosures and other ethics statements must also be included as appropriate for the manuscript type.

The implementation of free format should not affect the basic requirements for submission set by the publisher, such as the inclusion of a title page, limitations on the number of tables or figures, or other mandatory elements.

Free format mainly relates to the appearance and formatting of the text, while the structure and content requirements of submission are usually separate from this. The publisher may still have specific guidelines for these elements that must be followed, regardless of the use of free format. It is always advisable to consult the journal's guidelines for a complete understanding of the submission requirements and to ensure that the manuscript meets all of the necessary criteria.

How Are Journals Adopting Free Format Submissions?

Currently, over 350 journals are accepting free format submissions, where authors can submit their manuscripts using any consistent text and citation format, without following formatting rules. This can

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reduce the time spent on manuscript preparation, enabling you to concentrate on the core aspect, your research.

Journals are adopting free format submissions in several ways:

1- Electronic Submission Platforms: Many journals use electronic submission platforms that allow authors to submit their work in free format. These platforms provide authors with the ability to upload their work as a single file, as well as any accompanying multimedia elements.

2- Guidelines and Templates: Some journals provide authors with guidelines and templates for free format submissions, which help ensure that submissions are well-organized, professional, and easily readable.

3- Peer Review Process: To maintain the quality of the publication with free format submissions, many journals are incorporating a rigorous peer review process, which involves evaluating the content, format, and structure of submissions.

4- Technical Support: To ensure the success of free format submissions, many journals provide authors with technical support, such as help with formatting and preparing submissions, as well as advice on using multimedia elements.

To Wrap Up!

Ultimately, it depends on how the publisher implements the use of free format in published manuscripts to ensure the information is correctly disseminated. When a publisher adopts this approach, it could lead to a greater diversity of appearance in the published manuscripts, as authors would be free to use their preferred formatting styles. However, the publisher may still have some guidelines or limitations in place to maintain consistency and ensure the legibility and readability of the manuscripts. Overall, journals are adopting free format submissions using a combination of technical support and rigorous reviewing in order to ensure the quality and impact of free format submissions.

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Submitting Manuscripts
3. Trending Now

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Author
uttkarshabhosale

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