

Selecting the Right Journal (Part 1)

Author

Enago Academy

Post Url

<https://www.enago.com/academy/selecting-the-right-journal-part-1/>



Chew (1991) surveyed manuscripts rejected by the *American Journal of Roentgenology* (AJR) to investigate whether they had been published. If yes, then when and where. The results showed that 82% of the major papers and 70% of the case reports that were submitted to AJR during the study period were eventually published elsewhere (Radiology, Clinical Nuclear Medicine, etc.) or even in AJR within 18 months of being rejected. This directly tells us that [selecting the right journal](#) is a very important factor in the publication process.

We know that publication of research in [peer-reviewed journals](#) marks the last step in the scientific process. Through the process of peer review and publication, a research study is validated, disseminated, credited, and archived. Once published, a paper and the information it contains can be indexed, retrieved, cited, and incorporated into the knowledge base. When a paper is rejected, this process comes to a halt. Unless the paper can be accepted for publication elsewhere, the work will be lost. To choose a “[suitable](#)” journal is to select one that will maximize your chances of publication. Covered in this article are six easy steps to selecting the right journal.

Step 1: List the Field of Study and Related Fields

The first step in selecting a journal is to consider as many fields of study that pertain to the planned article.

Sample list for a Physics researcher

Research Topic: Fabrication of carbon nanotubes

The above research topic falls under the fields of Nanotechnology, Materials Science, Applied Physics, Physical Chemistry and Biomedical Engineering.

Similarly, strive to create a list of at least five fields of study that overlap with the proposed manuscript's content. Think broadly at this stage; you can narrow down the journal choices later.

Step 2: Find Journals Related to Those Fields

Once you have listed the fields of study that overlap with the manuscript's content, consult online resources, a university librarian, and/or professionals in the fields. This will help determine journals in each field. The reference list from your thesis may also provide clues to journals that publish in these topic areas. At this point you should also consider the stated purpose of the journal. For purposes of illustration, four broad categories of journals are suggested based on the [target audience](#):

- **General or all-purpose journals** contain elements of important social, political, and economic issues. They are usually target a broad audience and not a specialty.
- **Review journals** contain the current state of knowledge or practice in a particular field. They provide background information to those who want an overview on the current status in a field.
- **Research journals** are predominantly report original investigations, including research in the basic sciences. They usually target the specialists in a field.
- **Clinical or practice journals** have as their dominant purpose documenting the state of current practice. These journals include case reports, discussions, commentaries, etc.

Sample list for a Physics researcher

General or all-purpose journals: Nature, Science

Review journals: Review of Modern Physics, Applied Physics Reviews

Research journals: Nano Letters, Advanced Materials

Tip!

Concentrate your search on journals with online editions. They naturally have a wider audience.

Here is an helpful online resource to get you started:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

Step 3: List All the Journal Characteristics and Competitive Factors

By now you would have listed around 10 or 15 journals. Based on online research and advice from librarians or colleagues, list some of the major characteristics and competitive factors of each of these journals.

- **Content and Coverage:** Scientific journals publish numerous types of articles, including original articles, review articles, letters to the editor, editorials, news reports, commentaries, brief/short communications, and case reports. Journals reporting original research contain more unique contributions to the coverage of a field and therefore are selected more often than those containing only case reports.
- **Readership:** International peer-reviewed journals attract a wider readership than regional journals. English is the universal language of science. It is clear that the journals most important to the international research community will publish only in English. This is especially true for natural sciences. Most regional journals have now started to publish abstracts in English.
- **Publication Lag Time and Frequency of Publication:** Different journals have different lag times for acceptance (from the date of submission) and publication (from acceptance to print). This depends on the format of the submission as well as the frequency of publication. For example, Rapid Communications are published faster than Original or Review Articles. The frequency of a journal can be weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. The publication lag time for monthly journals is usually obviously lesser than that for a quarterly journal. However, the popularity of the journal (the number of articles waiting to be published) also plays a role here.
- **Impact Factor:** An index called Impact Factor helps to judge the quality of most of the journals. A high impact factor indicates that papers published in the journal have higher citations in the same or other journals. Impact factor is a good indicator for popularity and quality of research. But be careful; this index is only meaningful in the context of journals in the same general discipline. For example, specialized fields like Crystallography do not generate as many articles or citations as do broader fields such as Biotechnology or Genetics.

None of the above journal characteristics are necessarily good or bad. The importance of the above information lies in matching your manuscript optimally to the goals and characteristics of the journal. These are not the only points for selecting the right journal. These are the general criteria that will help you to prepare the probable target journal

list. In the [next post](#), we will talk about how to further narrow down the target journal list.

What do you think should be the criteria of [journal selection](#)? How do you select the right journal for your manuscript? Please share your thoughts with us in the comments section below.

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Selecting the Right Journal (Part 1). Enago Academy. 2016/08/25. <https://www.enago.com/academy/selecting-the-right-journal-part-1/>