

Description

Nowadays there are a plethora of journals for a researcher to choose from. Some journals are online only, others are online as well as print-based; some are prestigious, while others are restricted to a smaller readership base. Whatever journal is selected, the rules of the game are the same: follow the topics of interest, [format the manuscript](#) as per journal guidelines, and pay attention to the length of the manuscript. Not only does this help the paper enter the review process faster but also potentially leads to publication. Here are some general guidelines for authors while preparing their manuscript for submission.

Selecting the Right Journal

Authors should ensure that their [manuscript fits the scope of the journal](#). Journals clearly outline the scope on their web page. Submitting a manuscript that is out of the journal's scope will lead to an outright rejection. In the rare event that the manuscript is accepted by the journal, the readership and reach of the study might take a significant hit. It is important to note that most journals have a specific word count or page limit to adhere to. This may differ for various types of articles.

Journals often implement a limit on the number of figures or tables, giving authors the option to put some of the figures and tables into supplementary material. Authors should consider the specified word count or page limit while selecting the right journal for their manuscript.

Writing Sections of the Manuscript

In addition to page limit and manuscript word counts, journals may also specify word limit for specific sections of the manuscript, such as the Abstract (or Summary) and the Introduction. Authors must strictly adhere to the specified word limits. These sections should also be written with care. An Introduction should not, for instance, re-describe an entire field and state general knowledge abundantly, but should consider mainly the specific question being addressed.

The Conclusion section of the manuscript is also an important section, where the main conclusions of the study are stated, mentioning how the study contributes to the corresponding field of research. Researchers often scan through articles and pay emphasis to only the Abstract and Conclusions sections. Hence, it is critical to pay attention to the content and writing.

Ordering and Naming the Sections

A manuscript normally includes:

- Abstract or Summary
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Discussion, sometimes combined with Results

- References

The order of these sections as specified in the journal guidelines should not be overlooked. During initial review or technical check, the editor will check to see if the manuscript follows the order specified in the guidelines. Following the journal specified order also helps build coherence, thus helping readers understand the study better. It is essential to present the figures and tables in the format required by the journal. Note that the format and style vary from one journal to the other.

Conflicts of Interest

Research has to be carried out in the most “neutral” way to be honest and provide sound results to a scientific community, and ultimately, to the general audience. Personal interest can often produce bias in the interpretation and presentation of results, which will influence the way the results are perceived by the readers. [All possible conflicts between the research topic](#) and any of the authors and contributors, which could influence the unbiased presentation of scientific results, thus have to be disclosed. This includes (not limited to) membership to specific societies, boards of companies or non-governmental organizations, and additional job positions.

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Authors must ensure to obtain copyright permissions in case a figure, table, or any other material that was published elsewhere is borrowed—this generally occurs in the Introduction or Discussion sections. All copyrights for the original material have to be duly cited, so readers can clearly distinguish between your own contribution and already existing knowledge.

Writing a Cover Letter

In addition to the manuscript, authors are required to submit a [Cover Letter or Letter to the Editor](#) of the target journal. This letter should be written in a clear, concise, and polite way justifying why the research deserves to be published. General rules are to present a question that remains unanswered in the research field, the way this has been addressed in the study, and the main conclusions of the study.

Proofreading

[Proofreading](#) is a crucial step before submitting the manuscript to the journal. Once all the material necessary for submission has been put together, authors should consider taking a break, take a step back and go through the manuscript with a fresh mind. Authors often write scientific content with a tunnel vision which may cause them to overlook certain things. A coherent transition between sections is sometimes overlooked. This has to be double-checked once the manuscript is finalized. Even though authors may overlook the importance of [proofreading](#), these details may, in fact, influence the overall perception an editor or a reviewer has on the submitted manuscript.

Authors should double-check the data and figures once all the elements of the manuscript are put together. Consider requesting colleagues or fellow researchers to go through the manuscript before submission. It is always a good idea to consider feedback from a reader's perspective.

Conclusion

Authors should strictly follow the journal guidelines before submitting the manuscript. The way the results are presented, adherence to author guidelines, and the quality and clarity of writing shape the chances of the manuscript being accepted for publication.

Category

1. Journal Guidelines
2. Reporting Research

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