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Writing Research Articles for Publication in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract Published research results in early childhood education contribute to the field's knowledge, theory, and practice. They also guide future early childhood education research studies. The publication of research articles is an essential requirement for academics. For some researchers, however, writing may be a difficult activity, particularly the process of getting the study published. This article discusses basic issues in scholarly writing and offers guidelines on ways to organize and write scientific research manuscripts that are appropriate for early childhood education and other disciplines. It explains the importance of publishing, defines the meaning of a scientific research publication, and explains the process in manuscript preparation to guide emerging researchers to write research manuscripts that are comprehensible and will have a high probability of being accepted for publication. Finally, it describes the publication process.

Keywords Writing for publication · First-time author · Writing an article · Publication process · Scholarly writing

Criticism and testing are of the essence of our work. This means that science is a fundamentally social activity, which implies that it depends on good communication. In the practice of science we are aware of this, and that is why it is right for our journals to insist on clarity and intelligibility.
—Hermann Bondi

Introduction

For many decades early childhood education programs have expanded all over the world. Programs for young children in different countries have confronted countless challenges and issues. At present, society has acknowledged the importance of young children's learning based on an exponential increase in the new knowledge about and for early childhood education. Advances in the field are supported by rigorous research conducted by leading scholars and institutions who have identified the (a) knowledge and skills that children need to succeed in school and (b) teaching practices that are most appropriate for them. According to Saracho and Spodek (2012):

> Knowledge of the field of early childhood education is of three kinds: theory, research and practice. Although these spheres often seem independent of one another, they are interrelated. The process of knowledge generation is *cyclical*, rather than being deductive (top down) or linear (one step always follows another). The forms all overlap. The process usually begins with a problem or issue that needs to be studied through research; this research is driven by theory and practice. The results also contribute to theory and practice, which then provide directions for future research studies (p. 2).

Innovative knowledge based on the increase of related research in early childhood education requires that new knowledge continue to be available and readily accessible to the field. Researchers who conduct studies and publish their results develop innovative knowledge about good practice in early childhood education. The publication of research has many benefits, but the process may intimidate many researchers. Novice and even experienced researchers can benefit from strategic methods of preparing and writing research manuscripts to submit to professional journals (Dixon in press).

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Early childhood education researchers who want to write for publication for the first time can waste time and energy when they focus on writing behavior they learned in their graduate education courses. The thought process for published writing is different; it begins by identifying the journal readers' interests and organizing the ideas into a reasonable structure (Dixon 2011).

Writing for publication is a fundamental pursuit for academics. Traditionally, motivation to publish originate from scholarly, scientific, and ethical philosophies concerning the significance of disseminating knowledge. These reasons continue to be appropriate, but have been further increased by the expectations of a current university environment. Academics are required to publish. The quantity and quality of published work is used to evaluate their performance (McGrail et al. 2006).

Expectations to Publish in Academia

All over the world, scholars are experiencing pressure to publish their research. Writing and publishing peer-reviewed manuscripts is an essential requirement for academics. A current university environment expects high publication rates because these determine the performance of both the individuals and institutions. Regardless of a compelling personal and professional rationale to publish, academic publication productivity has consistently been low (McGrail et al. 2006). Some academics discontinue their productivity, because they lack the framework or formal structure to continue their writing (Morss and Murray 2001). Those who are early in their writing careers and lack confidence in their ability need professional support and encouragement (Baldwin and Chandler 2002). A number of academics feel that writing causes them to have fear and anxiety (Lee and Boud 2003). Others have an inadequate understanding of the writing and publication process. They also have emotional barriers (e.g., a fear of rejection, fear of competition) and ambiguity about which ideas are worthy of publication (Dies 1993). Even those who are confident that their ideas are worthwhile may lack confidence in their writing ability (Grant and Knowles 2000). Although a few researchers have become productive writers, many inexperienced academics have difficulties with the writing and publication process.

Writing for publication requires a highly developed level of writing skills and researchers find that the publication demands require them to learn strategies on how to become productive writers. Unfortunately, researchers often report that they did not receive this type of preparation in their graduate courses (Murray and Newton 2008). They did not have the opportunity to undertake a formal course in scientific writing. As graduate students, they adopted their professors' and previous authors' style and approach. Later, as emerging researchers, many used their academic readings to replicate the authors' writing style—including all of their related deficiencies—which caused them to develop continuous and systematic errors (Day and Sakaduski 2011).

Requirements on how to write research publications are vague. Numerous general books have been written on the subject, but these texts are missing the specific practices that writers need to publish (Murray, and Newton 2008). Researchers without preparation may find that writing a research article in a scientific style is challenging (Derntl 2011). A scientific paper is a well written and published report that describes the results of original research; therefore, it must adhere to specific requirements on how a scientific report is written and published (Day and Sakaduski 2011).

The purpose of this article is to explain the importance of publishing, define the meaning of a scientific research publication, and discuss the process of manuscript preparation in such a way that it can serve as a guide for inexperienced researchers in early childhood education and all disciplines. Finally, it describes the publication process. Since journals differ in their requirements, it is impossible to provide recommendations that are universally acceptable. Therefore, general basic standards that most journals from different disciplines accept will be provided.

Significance of Publishing

Publishing is important because it reports valid research findings that advance knowledge in the field. Such advancements affect not only the status of individuals in Academia and their institutions' reputations but also the journals and their sponsoring professional organizations. Publishing makes it possible for (a) new doctoral graduates to gain access to college/university positions; (b) faculty members to obtain higher salaries, be promoted, and get tenure; (c) professors to get different jobs; and (d) scholars to receive recognition, support, and prestige (Albers et al. 2011; Nihalani and Mayrath 2008).

The goal of scientific research is publication. Publishing research findings is an essential element of both the research process and the career in Academia. Researchers are evaluated based on their publications rather than their natural knowledge of either broad or narrow scientific subjects or their sense of humor or "charismatic personality" (Day and Sakaduski 2011). Usually, the number of journal publications and citations are publically reported and used to identify the most productive authors who have the highest impact on their institutions and their graduate

school programs. Particularly for faculty members employed at rigorous research institutions, the "publish or perish" practice is a reality (Albers et al. 2011). The publish or perish mentality at large research institutions frequently creates higher expectations for faculty members to publish scientific research.

The Scientific Research Publication

Researchers, students, authors, editors, and all others involved need to know the meaning of a scientific publication. Day and Sakaduski (2011) define a scientific paper as "a *written* and *published* report describing *original* research results." Scientific publications must fulfill requirements concerning *how* the paper is written and published. This means that the process, content, style, and development of the publication are equally important. A scientific publication is a *valid publication* when it is published in the appropriate research journal (e.g., peer-reviewed journal in the appropriate field). An outstanding research study that is published elsewhere (e.g., newspaper, proceedings, newsletters, conference reports, internal reports, newspapers) is not considered to be a scientific publication. Also research published in government reports, conference proceedings, institutional bulletins, and other ephemeral publications fail to meet the criteria of scientific publication (Day and Sakaduski 2011). For example, The Council of Biology Editors (CBE) developed the following definition, which is found in many contemporary publication guidelines.

> An acceptable primary scientific publication must be the first disclosure containing sufficient information to enable peers (1) to assess observations, (2) to repeat experiments, and (3) to evaluate intellectual processes; moreover, it must be susceptible to sensory perception, essentially permanent, available to the scientific community without restriction, and available for regular screening by one or more of the major recognized secondary services (Council of Biology Editors Newsletter 1968, pp. 1–2) such as educational abstracts, databases, and indices.

Recently, an ad hoc committee was created to examine and develop a working definition concerning a scientific publication. They examined the definition that was published in the 1968 Council of Biology Editors Newsletter. The ad hoc committee was very impressed with both the insight and the precision of the document that the Board and the Committee accepted it (Stegemann and Gastel 2009) as a current definition of a scientific research publication.

Manuscript Preparation

Writing in a scientific style may be difficult. The process may be an intimidating course of action for the inexperienced researcher for some experienced faculty members as well. A logical and systematic approach can reduce this feeling (Cunningham 2004). The standard structure of a scientific paper consists of a title, an abstract, and four sections that consist of introduction, methodology, results, and discussion (IMRaD). Briefly, IMRaD (introduction, methodology, results, and discussion) is the required format that researchers follow in presenting their research. It describes the appropriate and complete presentation of scientific research. Researchers are able to present: what is known, what is not known, and why the study was conducted (Introduction); who are the subjects, how the research was conducted, and how the results were assessed through the materials and procedures (Methodology); what was found (Results), and what is the importance of the study (Discussion) (Todorovic 2003). Table 1 provides a brief description of each section that progresses in sequence throughout the research article. For example, the introduction is proceeded by the methodology, then the results, and finally the discussion (Sharp 2002). The research article also includes a conclusion, references, appendices, and acknowledgements.

Title

The title is the component of the manuscript that is usually read first; therefore, it is important that it establishes appropriate expectations for the reader. Additionally, electronic indexing services depend heavily on the accuracy of the title to assist readers in locating relevant studies to their research. According to Day and Sakaduski (2011), a proper title has "… the fewest possible words that adequately describe the contents of the paper" (p. 9). In fact, the 6th edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) style manual sets a 12 word limit on article titles. A lengthy title frequently has too many *wasted words* such as titles that have "Investigations on …" at the beginning of the title. In contrast, brief titles are too broad and vague. For example, the title "Writing Reports" does not provide any information about the study. Therefore, all words in the title need to be carefully selected, related to each other, and properly ordered. According to Peat et al. (2002), appropriate titles need to (a) identify the main issue of the manuscript; (b) start with its subject; (c) be accurate, clear, specific, and complete; (d) exclude abbreviations; and (e) be appealing to readers. For example, Saracho (1998) conducted a factor analytic study to examine the social behaviors that are found in three- to- five- year-old children's play based on their cognitive style. Factors were

Table 1 Components of a scientific research publication

Component	Content
Title	Helps the reader to understand the nature of the research study and determine if they wish to read it
Abstract	Provides a complete but concise description of the study
	Gives a brief summary using a word limit that usually ranges between 200 and 300 words
	Includes key words for index listing and on-line search for databases
Introduction	Uses brief descriptions of previous related studies to support the current research
	Provides a theoretical framework to justify the need for the current research study
	Concludes with the hypotheses or research questions and the purpose of the study
Methodology	Describes everything that is needed to replicate the study such as it:
	• Explains and justifies the methodology used
	• Describes, procedures, materials, measures, analyses, and subjects used (including ethics and consent)
	• Describes and justifies the sample size calculation
	• Describes and justifies the statistics used to analyze the data
Results	Describes all findings (including significant, negative, and non-significant results)
	Complements the description of the outcomes with appropriate tables, graphs, and figures
Discussion	Emphasizes the major findings and compares them with findings from previous related studies
	Discusses any limitations of the study
	Provides recommendations for future research and practice
References	Provides complete references that were cited in the text
	Uses the current edition of the APA style to cite references in text and to list them in the references' section

Adapted from Cunningham's (2004) original table

identified according to the children's age and sex. She assessed, observed, and identified the social behaviors found in both the children's play and cognitive style. The factor analysis identified two dimensions of social behaviors in the different forms of play for each cognitive style. The title of her study was "Socialization Factors in the Cognitive Style and Play of Young Children."

Abstract

Abstracts are a one-paragraph summary of the complete study. They are important because they identify research studies in a specific area (Derntl 2011). The length of the abstract ranges between 200 and 300 words. Abstracts are well organized, are well written, and have brief but complete information that is easily understood. The abstract provides a general idea of the study's content. It describes the purpose, methodology, major results, and conclusions of the study. It should stand alone and be independent of the article to assist researchers to immediately identify a wide range of pertinent work (Selvanathan et al. 2006). Two examples of an abstract in early childhood education are found in Box 1: (a) an abstract of a qualitative study and (b) an abstract of a quantitative study. The first abstract summarizes a qualitative study where Saracho and Spodek (2010) investigated how families selected, used, and read storybooks to young children. They examined how parents read stories to their children in relation to a variety of genres in addition to information and narrative texts. Saracho and Spodek (2010) also explored the frequency and nature of story reading at home and their selection of children's literature books, the parents' perceptions about literacy, and their literacy involvement in their home environment. The second abstract summarizes a quantitative study where Saracho (1995) examined the relationship between three- to five-year-old children's cognitive styles and their play. She identified the play behaviors in the different play areas that are characteristic of the field dependent and field independent cognitive style.

Introduction

The introduction provides a background on the importance of the study by clearly describing the results of previous related studies. Since authors need to provide a complete literature review, researchers need to search, identify, read, and reference the findings of relevant studies. Since there are a variety of research methodologies that can be used to address a specific research question, researchers need to justify their selection and use of a specific methodology including their use of qualitative or quantitative data. The introduction needs to state (a) the research questions or hypotheses, (b) how these questions/hypotheses will be addressed, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) the expected

Box 1 Samples of early childhood education abstracts

Abstract

This study examined families' choices of children's literature books for joint story reading. Teachers, parents, and their children from five kindergarten classrooms participated in the study. Over a 4 month period, family members joined other parents twice a week to learn and practice story reading techniques. They selected children's literature books that were of interest to both of them and their children and were developmentally appropriate. Family members were interviewed and responded to a questionnaire before the intervention. The results provided insight in relation to the parents' perceptions about literacy, reading with families, and story reading. All members of the families read to their children frequently or daily and engaged the children in conversations about the books read. The books chosen to be read to the children were categorized by genre, with modern fiction being the most popular genre (Saracho and Spodek 2010, p. 401).

Abstract

Children's (n = 1,276) cognitive style was identified and their play was observed and recorded. Reliability and validity estimates were obtained on the measures and procedures. A repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance indicated significant results relating to the children's cognitive style and their play according to age. Also four significant interactions were found: (1) age and play behaviors; (2) play behaviors and cognitive style; (3) age and cognitive style; and (4) age, cognitive style and play behaviors. Significant differences were demonstrated between field dependent (FD) and field independent (FI) 3- to 5-year-old children's play behaviors in the physical, block, manipulative and dramatic forms of play. Most FD children displayed more play behaviors than did FI children. These results suggest that the FD and FI cognitive styles are providing a differential effect on the play behaviors of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children (Saracho 1995, p. 405).

Box 2 Sample early childhood education research questions

The following research questions can be used in a study that investigates the significance of matching the cognitive style of first- and third-grade students to their teachers (Saracho 1983).

What are the effects of the teachers' cognitive styles (more field dependent or more field independent) on their students' standardized achievement scores?

Are there differential effects for grade levels or for students who match or fail to match the teachers' cognitive styles?

findings, and (e) the rationale that led to the research questions/hypotheses. Box 2 presents sample research questions found in a study in early childhood education. The introduction should be less than a quarter of the total length of the report (Udani et al. 2007).

Methodology

While conducting the study, the researcher can write all the information and results in a notebook. This procedure will facilitate the writing of the methodology section, which includes a complete description about the study. The methodology section needs to include enough detail to help the researchers understand and replicate the study. A procedure that was used in a previous study needs to be referenced including any modifications that were made. Lastly, the analyses (including the statistical methodology and/or software package used) of the data are described (Udani et al. 2007). According to Maloy (2001), the methodology section should briefly (a) give details on the general kind of scientific procedures that were used; (b) describe the participants (See Box 3), measures, and equipment that were used; and (c) explain the procedures that were used in the study. Specifically it should discuss the sources of evidence and the analyses of the data.

Sources of Evidence

The methodology section describes the sources of evidence in relation to the units of study and the data or empirical measures that were used to address the research questions or hypotheses in solving a problem in early childhood education. Sources of evidence consist of participants and measures used in the study. Hence, the research site, group, participants, events, or other units studied are considered to be sources of evidence. A description needs to be provided for the readers to know their characteristics, the procedures, the basis for their selection, and a justification for these selections.

Box 3 Participants in an early childhood education study

Tests of cognitive style were administered to 20 first and 20 third-grade female teachers and a sample (480) of six boys and six girls for each teacher. Only female teachers were used since almost all of the primary teachers in the school district were females. First- and third-grade students and teachers were used as subjects to investigate the effects due to age levels. The first grade students' ages ranged from 6 years to 6 years, 11 months; the third-grade students' ages ranged from 8 years to 8 years, 11 months. Six boys and six girls in these age ranges were randomly selected from each teacher's classroom, while the teachers and students were randomly selected from a group of volunteers. All first-grade students had attended public school kindergarten during the previous year and both first- and third-grade students should have been administered the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills the previous year (Saracho 1983, p. 185).

The methodology section also specifies the data or experimental measures that were used to collect data, the procedures that were followed, and a justification for these selections. Data sources usually consist of participant and nonparticipant observations; unstructured or semi-structured interviews; documents and other artifacts; audio- or video-recordings; and standardized instruments such as surveys, tests, structured interview protocols, and categorical demographic information that were used to collect data across cases or units of research analyses (American Educational Research Association 2006).

Analyses

Researchers usually have more data than they need to publish. They need to reduce their data by selecting only the data that address their research questions or hypotheses. The selected data are analyzed with appropriate analyses (e.g., analyses of variance, factor analyses). The analytic techniques are justified and described in detail to help readers understand the data analyses, processes, and assumptions that are essential to explicit techniques (e.g., techniques used to undertake content analysis, discourse or text analysis, deliberation analysis, time use analysis, network analysis, or event history analysis). Qualitative studies need to address the procedures used for data reduction. The analyses and presentation of the results should focus on the research questions/hypotheses to support claims or conclusions drawn in the research (American Educational Research Association 2006). It is important to save the raw data, because a journal editor or referee may request to examine the data. Also after publication some researchers may request this information (Sharp 2002).

Results

Researchers need to refer to their focal research statement to determine which results to use. They need to only present the results and analyses that address the research questions or hypotheses. Adding irrelevant data, tables, and analyses will be confusing and the manuscript will lose the focus of the research. The results should be presented in a clear concise format. When there are only a few factors, the results should be discussed in the text of the manuscript. Otherwise, the results should be presented in tables or figures for clarity purposes. The results section clearly describes the outcomes of the study. Outcomes that use multiple data points need to be presented in tables or figures to show the importance of the study. However, these outcomes need to be summarized in the accompanying text. All outcomes do not need a separate table or figure. The results section should only have a few numerical results or a simple description of the outcomes in the text rather than a table or figure. The description in the text has an appropriate reference to tables and figures that includes all of the information that addresses the research questions or hypotheses. This section also includes statistical parameters that support the stated results. However, it is important to avoid using tables that have large quantities of data. Since a graphical representation is frequently easier to understand, researchers can present the results in a graph instead of a table. The titles, tables, and figures need to be self-explanatory without needing to refer to the text (Cunningham 2004). According to Maloy (2001), the results section should briefly describe (in a sentence or two) the study and report only those results that address the research questions or hypotheses based on the data.

Discussion

The discussion section critically analyzes, compares, and discusses the results in relation to the research problem, questions/hypotheses, and methodology. The findings contribute to new knowledge, which is compared with the previous knowledge (Maloy 2001). The discussion section describes the interpretation of the data, discusses whether or not the results of the study support its research questions or hypotheses, and compares the results of the study with those of previous studies. It is important to identify and discuss any limitations of the study and any suggestions to reduce limitations (Udani et al. 2007) in future studies. In addition, Maloy (2001) states that the discussion section is where researchers address each major result by giving explanations (a) for the patterns, principles, and relationships that are found in the results; (b) on how the results in the study support or contradict those results in the studies that were cited in the introduction; and (c) for the reasons of any agreements, contradictions, or exceptions. It should include recommendations for future research and end with a conclusion.

Researchers need to suggest additional future research that might attend to the study's limitations. According to Maloy (2001), the discussion section needs to describe the theoretical implications, practical applications, ways to apply the outcomes to other situations, and how the outcomes provide a better understanding of the area under study. Researchers need to make comprehensive explanations by providing evidence for each conclusion and discussing probable reasons for expected and unexpected findings. They also need to provide a critical discussion and assessment of (a) any agreement, contradiction, or knowledge gap; (b) the judgment of their importance; and (c) any possible outcomes that are essential in leading the manuscript to the conclusion.

Conclusion

Some researchers prefer to include a conclusion section in their manuscript to provide a specific and summarizing statement of the results. The conclusion opens with a clear

statement of the major outcomes. Such statement should be short and to the point. The significance of the outcomes needs to be justified using support from previous related studies. The meaning of the outcomes of the study needs to be considered in comparison to other related studies (Maloy 2001). The conclusion section should end with four or five most important conclusions from the results of the study. These can be stated using bullet points to offer the utmost effect (Cunningham 2004). Researchers may prefer to include their recommendations for future studies in this section.

References

References are integrated in the manuscript in relation to published studies that support the study. Reference citations are found in the text and are listed in the cited references section at the end of the manuscript (Derntl 2011). The references provide the basis for the study. References should be accurate with all the sources of information that were used. Although there are many styles of referencing, most journals require authors to use the guidelines from the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA 2010). In preparing the manuscript, these guidelines need to be followed for both the references section and the citations in the text.

Appendices

The Appendices section includes any information that will help readers understand the results of the study. For example, if the data were gathered using questionnaires, a copy of the questionnaire may be included in the appendix. For example, Saracho (1988) included a copy of her Preschool Reading Attitudes Scale as an appendix at the end of the article.

Acknowledgements

Writing and conducting studies require assistance of others. Individuals who helped with the preparation of the manuscript or provided support for the study can be acknowledged. Such individuals range from those who provided financial support, helped with experimental techniques to those who read or provided feedback on the final manuscript. Box 4 provides acknowledgements for financial support for an early childhood education study on family literacy in early childhood education.

Instructions to Authors

Most journals have their own requirements and guidelines, which can be found (a) in the hard copy of the journal that has been selected and/or (b) on its website. These requirements and guidelines are found in a section titled, "Instructions for Authors." Authors need to follow these instructions if they wish to publish scientific papers in respective journals.

The Publishing Process

The sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA 2010) identifies the authors' responsibilities in publishing scholarly articles in (a) the preparation of the manuscript; (b) undertaking administrative and ethical responsibilities; (c) meeting the journal's policy requirements; and (d) cooperating with the journal editor, editorial staff, and publisher. These responsibilities include a wide range of issues, such as using the appropriate research design to accept or reject the research hypotheses, provide a strong theoretical rationale to support the research hypotheses, analyze the data correctly, accurately interpret the results, clearly write the study, and follow the required formatting within the manuscript. Obviously, there are many responsibilities that need to be met and many skills that need to be demonstrated when developing an appropriate manuscript for submission to a scholarly research journal.

The Submission Process

Many (e.g., Albers et al. 2011; Floyd et al. 2011; Nihalani and Mayrath 2008) suggest that before submitting a manuscript to a journal, authors verify that the manuscript is appropriate for the selected journal, review the journal's guidelines for submission, and proofread the manuscript. The journal needs to be carefully selected to make sure that it is appropriate for the manuscript. The journal's website will provide manuscript specifications and guidelines to authors. When authors submit a manuscript to a journal, the editor acknowledges the receipt of the manuscript and sends it out for review.

Journal Selection

Researchers need to select the journal that is most appropriate for the manuscript. They can go to the journal's website that describes the journal's background and intended readership. This information guides researchers to determine which journal is the most appropriate outlet for their work. The most widely used journals in early childhood education are presented in Box 5.

Journal Specifications

The journal's website has a section that provides authors with guidelines for publishing a manuscript. For example,

Box 4 Acknowledgements

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Box 5 Early childhood education journals

Early Child Development and Care	Publishes studies on all facets of early child development and care
	Includes descriptive and evaluative articles on social, educational and preventive medical programs for young children, experimental and observational studies, critical reviews and summary articles
Early Childhood Education Journal	Examines early childhood education issues, trends, policies, and practices
	Supports points of view and practical recommendations
Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP)	First open-access, peer-reviewed, bilingual Internet journal in early childhood education and care
Early Childhood Research Quarterly (ECRQ) Affiliated with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Publishes empirical research (quantitative or qualitative) on early childhood development, theory, and educational practice
Early Education and Development (EE&D)	Publishes articles that focus on educational and preschool services
	Publishes studies on children and their families
	Includes implications for practice of research and solid scientific information
Journal of Early Childhood Research	Offers an international forum for empirical research on learning and development in early childhood
	Includes policymakers and practitioners working in fields related to early childhood
Journal of Research in Childhood Education Affiliated with the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)	Publishes articles that advance knowledge and theory for the education of children (birth through early adolescence)
	Includes reports of empirical research, theoretical articles, ethnographic and case studies, participant observation studies, and studies using data collected from naturalistic settings
	Has cross-cultural studies and international concerns

it specifies the length in words, main parts, references style, and how to set up tables, figures, and other illustrations. It is important that authors follow the journal's specifications. Most research journals require that authors follow the latest edition of the APA manual (Dixon 2011).

Manuscript Submission

Most manuscripts are submitted electronically in the journal's website. Authors follow the directions for submission that are posted in its website. The manuscript is submitted with a cover letter. The letter should confirm that the manuscript is the author's original work and that it is not being submitted to another journal. Original manuscripts are submitted to one journal at a time and cannot be submitted to another journal until the journal editor where the manuscript was first submitted releases the manuscript.

After the manuscript is submitted, the peer-review process is initiated and the editor or an editorial assistant acknowledges receipt of the manuscript, designates it a number, and examines if the manuscript is suitable for the journal. Sometimes, editors find that the manuscript is inappropriate and reject it without full review or require the authors to make changes before it is sent out to reviewers (Albers et al. 2011; Floyd et al. 2011).

Peer-Review Process

The submission of a manuscript to a journal activates the peer-review process, which determines the quality of the manuscript, its importance to the field, and its appropriateness for the journal (APA 2010). If the editors consider that the manuscript is appropriate, they assign it to an action editor. The action editor invites reviewers (usually three) who have the expertise to accurately review the manuscript. These reviewers are provided with manuscripts that do not include any identifying information about the authors so that the peer review process is anonymous. The peer-review process usually takes approximately 2–4 months. Then the action editor decides on the

disposition of the manuscript (Floyd et al. 2011) and writes a letter to the author summarizing the reviewers' comments with suggestions. The letter also communicates to the author the decision to "accept, revise and resubmit," or "reject" the manuscript. When authors revise and resubmit a manuscript, they usually write a letter to the action editor describing in detail the revisions based on the reviewers' recommendations. If the manuscript is rejected, authors should use the editor's suggestions to revise the manuscript and submit it to a different journal that may be a better match for the topic and research quality (Martínez et al. 2011). The peer-review process is tedious and time-consuming, but many view it to be a scientific requirement (Albers et al. 2011).

Concluding Remarks

Writing scientific research publications is just as difficult as designing and conducting the research study. The manuscript needs to be revised several times and criticized by colleagues who are both familiar and unfamiliar with the area of study. Most of all, authors need to write a manuscript that is clear, direct, and understandable.

Most emerging and many productive researchers find writing difficult and dread the many revisions of the manuscript. However, when a manuscript is accepted for publication, authors get a feeling of satisfaction and achievement. Of course, seeing one's work in print makes it all worthwhile.

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