

Getting your Submission Right and Avoiding Rejection

Less than a decade ago, manuscripts were manually submitted to publishers. The cover letter, copies of the manuscript, and figures were placed in a large envelope and sent to the editorial office via snail mail. Authors submitting papers understood that failing to follow submission guidelines could result in the loss of precious time (back then, a few weeks to a month!) if the editorial office had to return the manuscript for any reason. As a result, authors tended to carefully adhere to journal Author Guidelines and faithfully follow them.

Today, submission of a manuscript to any scientific journal takes only a few clicks on a computer. A manuscript can be submitted from anywhere — the author's office or home, a café, or even from an airline flight at 32 000 feet. The ease of online submissions, however, has contributed to several common mistakes, which can still cost time for the authors as the editorial staff work to correct mistakes. The most common mistake is incomplete or incorrect entry of author/coauthor information. A few simple checks prior to submission can help avoid such errors and resultant manuscript processing delays.

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Outlined herein are a few additional key hints authors can use to avoid processing delays and the likelihood of their manuscript being *rejected-without-review*. First of all, know the requirements of the journal to which you are submitting your manuscript. Read the Author Guidelines posted on the journal Web site and, for *The Journal of Physical Chemistry Letters* (JPCL), use the Author Checklist as a quick check of the composed manuscript before submitting. Having a well-composed manuscript with a clear focus addressing an important issue in physical chemistry is the foremost important criterion for publication in JPCL. The title, abstract, and discussion should clearly highlight the significant scientific advances and justify the need for urgent communication. Submission of a manuscript previously rejected by another journal without reformatting for JPCL or without providing the essential focus on physical chemistry research that requires rapid publication is likely to result in the manuscript being *rejected-without-review*.

The next important step in the submission process is to have correct e-mail addresses of all coauthors. E-mail addresses are used to uniquely identify each person in the journal database. If the coauthor has multiple e-mail accounts, use his/her primary e-mail address in the Paragon Plus account. It is important that each author whose name appears in the paper is also listed in the submission process in Paragon Plus. The author names entered in Paragon Plus should exactly match the names and order in which they appear in the manuscript. Because we notify all authors that a manuscript containing their name has been

Key Steps before Submitting to JPCL

- Read Author Guidelines and follow manuscript format
- Provide physical chemistry focus and justify urgency
- Confirm coauthors' email addresses and get their approval for submission
- Enter complete and correct emails of all coauthors. Use the primary email of Paragon Plus account if the coauthor has multiple email addresses.
- Suggest appropriate reviewers with no conflict of interest
- Upload files and proof-read PDF file before pressing SUBMIT button

submitted, any bounced e-mails are scrutinized, which results in processing delays. Consider sending presubmission e-mails to coauthors to confirm their correct contact information and consent for publication before submitting the manuscript. Manuscripts are not sent out for review until all author entries are verified for accuracy. By providing complete and accurate coauthor information, the submitting author can avoid unnecessary processing delays. If a coauthor's e-mail address is unavailable, the submitting author should include a brief explanation in the cover letter.

The third step in the submission process is to suggest preferred reviewers. The Editor, at his/her discretion, may or may not use suggested reviewers, but preferred reviewers' names assist the editor in obtaining additional reviewers based on the field of expertise. Hence, authors should make a sincere effort to provide names of scientists who have the expertise and objectivity to evaluate the manuscript. Furthermore, it is helpful to suggest reviewers who have direct overlap with your research area, as opposed to well-known experts in tangential fields. The JPC and JPCL editorial offices carefully scrutinize suggested reviewer names and corresponding e-mail addresses before using them. Authors should refrain from suggesting names of their colleagues, friends, past students, current collaborators, or anyone who may have a conflict of interest in reviewing the manuscript. Any deliberate attempt to manipulate the review process will be seen as unethical and can result in the immediate rejection of a manuscript.

Having a well-composed manuscript with a clear focus addressing an important issue in physical chemistry is the foremost important criterion for publication in JPCL.

The final submission step requires authors to upload their manuscript and Supporting Information files. Prior to the final submission step, verify that your files have uploaded properly and

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that you have used the correct file designations. Open the PDF proof, which is formed from the files you upload, and confirm that it has formed correctly. If you encounter any problems, contact the ACS Help Desk for assistance. It is the PDF proof and Supporting Information files that will be used by the reviewers to evaluate your manuscript. A poorly formed PDF proof can frustrate reviewers and make a bad first impression. Once you click the "SUBMIT" button, Paragon Plus will not allow you to make further changes to your files. Any changes must be manually processed by the ACS Help Desk or editorial office, which again, can cause processing delays.

With the release of *JPCL*'s debut impact factor (6.213), the number of submissions has been rapidly increasing. We would like to emphasize that *JPCL* is not dedicated to the publication of short physical chemistry papers but rather to the publication of papers that disseminate significant scientific advances in the field of physical chemistry. In several countries there is a continuing pressure on authors to maximize their publications. As a result of this institutional demand and internal competition, authors tend to write short papers with limited data and incremental results. Such papers often lack the rigor of good science and are often rejected without sending them out for external review. The *JPCL* editors screen each submission carefully for its physical chemistry scope, novelty, and urgency for communicating cutting-edge research. Papers that do not meet these three *JPCL* criteria are returned to the authors without further consideration.

We would like to emphasize that *JPCL* editorial offices are committed to providing the physical chemistry community with a fast, fair, and streamlined editorial process. By following *JPCL* submission guidelines and composing manuscripts with high scientific quality, authors like you can help us expedite the processing of your important scientific results.

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■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

Notes

Views expressed in this Editorial are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the ACS.