

THE PEER REVIEW JOURNAL PROCESS II: THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF SUBMITTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT TO A PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL AND WHAT TO DO AFTER THE COMMENTS ARRIVE

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Adapted from a figure by Dale Benos

Choosing the Right Journal

Target audience

- “Who would be interested in reading this paper?”

Import and significance of the findings

- Seek input from colleagues

Decide on the journal before beginning to write

Rank order your journal preferences and then ask yourself the tough questions

Impact Factor Scores and Acceptance Rates may be a first step in making your list of potential journals

The Do's

- ⦿ Examine the scope of the journal and description of its contents before submitting.
- ⦿ Format the paper appropriately (Read the Instructions!)
 - Submitting in another journal's format could suggest that the author may not pay attention to detail.
 - Suggests that the paper has been submitted elsewhere first and it was rejected.

The Do's

- Look into whether the journal has page charges or submission fees
- Prepare a cover letter that not only says we are submitting the paper but also what the novel findings are (newsworthiness factor)
- Suggest Potential referees and a member of the Editorial Board where appropriate
- Enlist the help of a native English-speaking colleague to assist with the preparation of your manuscripts if English is not your first language

The Do's

- Read your manuscript carefully prior to submission (don't be a victim to typo-blindness!)
- State the hypothesis of your study prominently in the introduction section
- Provide all authors, including students, an opportunity to comment on the manuscript before it is submitted
- Try to make your study complete. Resist the temptation to submit your work as LPU's (least publishable units)

The Do's

- Be willing to accept constructive criticism from trusted colleagues
- Others??

The Don'ts

- ⦿ Assume that everything is OK once you submit your manuscript
 - Things sometimes fall through the cracks
 - If you don't get an acknowledgement in a couple of days follow-up
 - If you don't hear about the status of your paper in 2 months contact the journal to inquire on how the review is going
- ⦿ Include data that has been published previously, other than in abstract form.

The Don'ts

- Rely too heavily on the spell-check feature of your word processor (but do use it!). Don't include titles on figures intended for publication
- Give co-authors unlimited amounts of time to comment on the manuscript. Set them a deadline after which you will proceed with the submission with or without their input.
- Others??



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Explaining Editorial Decisions' Categories

- ⦿ Reject Without Review
- ⦿ Reject After Review
- ⦿ Revise and Resubmit (Major)
- ⦿ Revise and Resubmit
- ⦿ Revise and Resubmit (Minor)
- ⦿ Conditional Acceptance or Acceptance

Thick Skin

- If you don't have it develop it!
- Pay close attention to the criticisms and don't always expect any positive comments
- If the reviewers made some recommendations for improvement, even if they recommend rejection of the manuscript, the reviewer sees at least something worthwhile in your paper

Resubmitting Your Manuscript

- ⦿ Don't procrastinate about revising and resubmitting
- ⦿ Most journals have a two month rule
 - After this time it is considered a new submission and it will go out for re-review
- ⦿ While the paper is still fresh in the referee's mind, you might get a better reception to your revisions

Revised Paper

- Assume that the referee will see your response (though often this does not actually happen) and write it as though you are specifically responding to them
- Be courteous and thank them for their input and respond to every single point with a “we did this, see page x, line y” or a “we respectfully disagree for the following reason(s)”
- Spell it all out carefully and logically so that the Editors don’t have to fish about for whether or not you adequately addressed the issues

The Revision Process

- If your paper is returned for revision, you are in good company
- It's OK to get mad, but don't act on it!
- Try to understand what the reviewers are really saying
 - If the reviewers did not understand your work, is it because you didn't present it clearly in the first place?
- Look for clues from the editor (the final arbiter) as to the extent of revision needed
 - Re-writes only
 - More experiments

Responding to Reviewers

- ⦿ Complete additional experiments/data collection if needed
- ⦿ Address all comments in a point-by-point fashion
 - Resist the temptation to prepare an impassioned response to points with which you disagree
 - Stand firm (diplomatically) if that is truly the right thing to do
- ⦿ Sincerely thank the editor and reviewers for helping you to improve your work
 - They have invested a lot of time, mostly on a voluntary basis
- ⦿ Ask a neutral colleague to review your response

Major Reasons for Rejection

- ⦿ Inappropriate for the journal
 - Do your homework
- ⦿ Merely confirmatory/incremental
 - Avoid LPU's
- ⦿ Describes poorly-designed or inconclusive studies
 - Focus on your hypothesis
- ⦿ Poorly written
 - Great science in an ugly package can still be rejected

Questions/Comments?