What You Should Know About Submitting a Manuscript for Publication in a Journal: The Editor's Perspective

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Selection of the Right Journal

- There are many journals today. It is important to select one that fits your paper well.
- Going to the most highly rated journal is not always the best strategy.
- See what journals you cite in your paper.
- Review the mission of the journals you are considering. Available on the website for journal.
- Try to cite a recent paper from the journal in your paper.

Cover letter?

- Some journal require these. Others don't.
- Review the instructions to authors on the website to see what is needed.

Overall Length

- General guidelines are from 20 to 40 TOTAL pages.
- Too short: Not enough theory
- Too long: Seen as unprofessional. Often done by students or young faculty trying to publish a dissertation.
- It may be necessary to divide a very complicated study into 2 or more papers.

Focus of Paper

- Frame the research questions so they fit the mission of the journal

- DO NOT include everything you did.

- Focus on the finished product and the variables that worked.

Abstract

- Review the instructions for authors.
- Not as important as other parts of paper for the initial review.
- Very important for the final paper
- Abstract needs to get the reader interested in the paper.

Introduction-General

- Initial paragraph. Explain why the research questions are important and how they add to existing literature.

- Overall focus. Omit historical background of the topic and very general theory. You are writing for people already in the field.

- Review research related to what you are doing and indicate how your study adds to this literature.

- Reviewers are often selected from people cited in the paper.

Introduction-Empirical

- Theory and review should consider each of the independent and dependent variables, as well as control variables.

- Include formal, testable predictions. Summarize these are the end of the Introduction.

- Make sure the theory and review provide a rationale for each prediction.

Introduction-Qualitative

- Make sure the theory provides discussion of each of the issues that is later coded in the data.

- Include a set of research questions.

- Content analysis papers often have hypotheses.

Theoretical Papers

- Make the focus clear in the first 1-3 paragraphs.
- Explain what body of published research you draw on in supporting the arguments made.
- Make sure that any reference to society or to bodies of research has at least one supporting citation.
- No Method or Results section
- Be sure to add a summary and conclusions at the end.

Method

- Varies greatly by discipline
- Describe the sample that is used in some detail.
- Describe every measure used.
- Be sure to include Cronbach alphas for all scales.
- For qualitative, explain how the data were coded. Many journals require formal assessment of the validity of the coding.

Results

- Organize these around the hypotheses or research questions.
- Remind the reader about each quantitative prediction and explain how each is tested.
- Do not introduce new research questions or variables here.

Discussion and Conclusions

- Be sure to tie the findings back to the initial theory.
- Review all the major findings of the study and discuss their theoretical and/or practical implications.
- This is least important in terms of acceptance or rejection. Often not carefully read by editors or reviewers.

Tables and Figures

- These need to be understandable without reading the text.

- Do not use actual variable names from the analysis.

- Use table notes to explain all abbreviations, and to indicate the possible scale range for any numerical variables.

Editorial Feedback

- Always negative! Be prepared.
- Revise and resubmit or reject and resubmit is good feedback.
- Respond to every request in a detailed letter that cuts and pastes the feedback, and adds your responses.

Reviewers

- Volunteer to be a reviewer!

- Remember to provide positive as well as negative feedback.

- Do not worry about copyediting or provide detailed wording suggestions.