

# **Navigating the submission maze: what do publishers look for in a good paper?**

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# What are we looking for?

Two questions:

- Is it a good research question?
- Is it answered in the best possible way?
  - Study type
  - Execution

## Prepare the ground

- Look up the reporting guidelines: CONSORT, STROBE, etc.
  - See <https://www.equator-network.org/>
- Pre-register
  - A MUST for trials
  - Desirable for everything else
- Get good statistical advice
- Sort out authorship

## Authorship

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

## Choosing a journal

A targeted approach is best

- Look for
  - Interest expressed in editorials
  - Commissions
  - Appearance in your own reference list
  - Turnaround time
  - Funder requirements

## Submission

- Read submission guidelines and get important things right (eg, RiC panel or similar)
- Concise covering letter that explains why this is an important question, and why this journal
- Beware of cut and paste
- Consider preprint options

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## Dealing with rejection

- Keep your temper
- If you are unclear as to the reason for the reject, ask the editor
- If you think the decision was wrong (eg, misinterpretation by reviewer), see if you can appeal
- Appeals usually need to do very well at re-review

## Dealing with revision

- If you are asked to revise, this is generally a good sign
- Make sure you address all reviewer points
- If points are unclear or contradictory, ask editor
- Keep a tracked changes version of your paper
- Stay focused and respond promptly and comprehensively

## Post-publication

- Ask editor and your internal press team if you think a press release is warranted. Consider Science Media Centre
- Figure out potential pitfalls, misunderstandings, and criticisms
- Prepare social media strategy in advance
- Avoid hype and keep your temper
- Prepare for journal correspondence

## Summary

- Start with a focused question, *then* identify the best method
- Make publication planning part of your strategy from the start
- Target journal that is the best fit, not just impact factor
- Move swiftly when you can, but prepare for the long haul
- Be ready for public outreach, but remember that good work speaks for itself