
EDITORIAL FORWARD

Authors' Responsibilities and Common Pitfalls in Submitting Quality Manuscripts to Academic Journals

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of scientific research is to uncover the natural phenomena that govern the behavior of matter in the world around us. Researchers across diverse fields—such as agriculture, environmental science, engineering, and medicine—aim to apply this knowledge to improve the human living standard (Wilson, 1998; National Research Council, 2002). However, the impact of research depends not only on discovery but also on how effectively it is communicated. Without proper dissemination, even the most groundbreaking findings could remain inaccessible and have limited practical influence.

In this context, publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals stands as the most credible and widely accepted method for disseminating research findings. When researchers choose to publish, they must also adopt the role of authors. This transition is often challenging, particularly for those new to academic publishing, due to inexperience in scholarly writing, unfamiliarity with submission standards, and language barriers (Day and Gastel, 2012; Salager-Meyer, 2008).

This article outlines the critical aspects researchers should consider when preparing a manuscript for journal submission and highlights common pitfalls to avoid in order to increase the chances of successful publication.

AUTHORS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICAL ADVICE

1. Clarity of Language and Adherence to Journal Format

Authors must ensure that their articles are written clearly and comprehensibly for the intended audience. Additionally, submissions must align with the stylistic and structural guidelines set by the target journal. Derntl (2014) highlights the necessity of clarity and adherence to journal guidelines by discussing how desk rejection of manuscripts frequently occurs due to poor language and improper formatting.

Given that most international academic journals require manuscripts to be in English, authors—particularly non-native English speakers—should seek help from language professionals or proficient English-speaking colleagues. Many submissions are rejected in the initial screening phase due to poor grammar, unclear writing, or awkward phrasing, regardless of the quality of the research (Salager-Meyer, 2008; Gastel and Day, 2016).

Authors must also strictly follow the journal's formatting requirements. Editorial teams expect uniformity in presentation and will not make allowances for inconsistent formatting. Non-compliance with these requirements often leads to desk rejection (Belcher, 2019; Cargill and O'Connor, 2013).

2. Originality of Research Work

Peer-reviewed journals only accept original, comprehensive, and meticulously carried out research. Reputable journals do not accept manuscripts based on unfinished research or preliminary findings, which are frequently excused by time or resource limitations. These submissions are not credible or scientifically sound enough to be shared (Day and Gastel, 2012; Glasman-Deal, 2020).

Common Challenges and Mistakes

3. Carelessness in Following Author Guidelines

A frequent issue is the submission of manuscripts that ignore journal-specific author guidelines. This includes incorrect formatting of titles, headings, citations, and references, especially the omission of DOIs where required. Such oversights signal a lack of professionalism and often result in immediate rejection, regardless of the manuscript's scientific quality (Belcher, 2019; Cargill and O'Connor, 2013).

4. Presentation of Tables and Figures

Tables and figures ought to be self-contained and simple enough to understand without a lot of help from the main text. A clear and succinct title, educational captions, and definitions for any symbols or abbreviations used should all be included. Captions that are unclear or incomplete reduce the impact of data presentation and make it more difficult for readers to understand what is being presented. Despite their significance, authors frequently fail to give enough thought to creating tables and figures in a way that is easy for readers to understand. This could be partially caused by a lack of knowledge about the technical concepts necessary for the efficient creation of visual data elements (Day and Gastel, 2012; Hofmann, 2014).

5. Quality of Figures

Figures—such as pictures, graphs, and charts—play a crucial role in communicating data visually. However, according to our observations many authors underestimate the importance of figure quality. Low-resolution images, pixelation, and tiny fonts can obscure key findings. Authors must ensure that figures are high-resolution, visually clear, and use appropriately sized fonts for all labels and legends. Well-prepared figures enhance the readability and impact of the manuscript.

RESPONDING TO REVIEWER COMMENTS

All reviewer comments must be addressed by authors in a courteous, thorough, and methodical way. They should include concise, well-reasoned explanations in the response letter if they think that any of the reviewer's recommendations are incorrect or irrelevant. The response document should include a detailed explanation and clear highlights of all manuscript revisions. A more effective editorial decision-making process is made possible by this open and professional approach, which also aids editors and reviewers in assessing the authors' responses.

But it's frequently noted that some authors don't adequately address reviewers' comments, and occasionally they don't make the required revisions to the manuscript text. The publication process may be delayed as a result of such omissions, which can present difficulties for editorial teams (Tennant *et al.*, 2017).

CONCLUSION

A crucial step in the scientific method is publishing research in peer-reviewed journals, which enables scientists to exchange findings, establish their reputations, and advance knowledge worldwide. Authors must approach manuscript preparation rigorously, professionally, and meticulously if they hope to succeed in this endeavor. Researchers can significantly increase the possibility that their work will be accepted and acknowledged in the academic community by following language and formatting guidelines, making sure that the work is unique, meticulously preparing figures and tables, and carefully considering the comments of reviewers.

REFERENCES

- Belcher, W. L. (2021). *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. University of Chicago Press. 427pp.
- Day, R. A., and Gastel, B. (2012). *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* (7th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Derntl, M. (2014). Basics of research paper writing and publishing. *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 6(2), 105–123. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTEL.2014.066856>
- Gastel, B., and Day, R. A. (2016). *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* (8th ed.). Greenwood.
- Glasman-Deal, H. (2020). *Science Research Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English*. Imperial College Press.
- Hofmann, A. H. (2014). *Scientific Writing and Communication: Papers, Proposals, and Presentations* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- National Research Council. (2002). *Scientific Research in Education*. National Academies Press.
- Salager-Meyer, F. (2008). Scientific publishing in developing countries: Challenges for the future. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 7(2), 121–132.
- Tennant, J. P., et al. (2017). A multi-disciplinary perspective on emergent and future innovations in peer review. *F1000Research*, 6, 1151. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.12037.3>
- Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. Knopf.

Professor P.K.Dissanayake

Editor-In-Chief–JAS-SL

Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Belihuloya, Sri Lanka.

1st May 2025

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2488-3373>

<https://doi.org/10.4038/jas.v20i2.11648>