



#2: Doing Your Homework

How Will I Know What Readers Want?

Before beginning to write, consider these questions about potential readers:¹

- Who are most likely to read your work? Who else might read it?
- What are backgrounds/careers of likely readers?
- What is main point of interest for readers?
- How much experience or familiarity are readers likely to have with your subject?
- What can readers expect to learn from your work?
- What do you want readers to do as result of reading your work?

How Will I Know What Editors Want?

Editors want even more than readers want, namely papers that:¹

- Interest/excite their readers, advance knowledge & lead to new ideas
- Resonate with their publication's purpose, follow guidelines & are well written
- Accurately represent the situation or work that was done

How Do I Choose a Journal or Other Publication?

Many new authors submit to publications that are inappropriate for their paper. Choose one that publishes similar material to what you plan to write. Consider these factors:³

- **Quality & reputation** - Is publication well known and recognized by your peers or priority audience? Start with quality publications in your field - at the least, you might get good feedback to improve the paper and submit it to your next choice.
- **Fit** - Does the publication best fit the topic or point of your paper?
- **Speed of review** - How quickly will your paper be accepted and published?
- **Visibility and accessibility** - Is publication available in print and electronic format in libraries and pre-publication systems? Can you circulate copies? Is the publication open access?

What Type of Publication Should I Choose?

Each publication offers unique publishing opportunities, but the following are more common:

- **Research Articles** report original scientific results with figures, tables, references & abstract
- **Review Articles** summarize current knowledge about relevant subject area & outline future directions of research
- **Brief Communications or Field Notes** report new developments/advances, innovative methods, & relevant policies/perspectives (with 'personal' commentary) in timely, short fashion
- **Trade Magazines**, published by non-profit organizations, feature stories from successful community efforts; such as Y-USA's *Perspective*, NRPA's *Parks and Recreation*, NACDD's *Chronic Disease Chronicles*, NACCHO's *Exchange*, and SOPHE's *News and Views*.
- **Editorials or Comments** address significant aspects of recently published paper without being personal
- **Book/Media Reviews** provide a critique (not a summary) of a book, website or tool

RAFTS acronym is used to raise key issues that authors need to consider:²

Role – helps writer decide on point of view & voice

Audience – reminds writer how to communicate ideas to others; helps determine content & style

Format – helps organize ideas into various conventions (letters, interviews, reports & stories)

Topic or subject – helps writer focus on main ideas

Strong verb – directs writer to writing purpose, e.g., persuade, analyze, create, predict, compare, defend, or evaluate

Where Can I Find Examples of Published Work by Communities Like Mine?

Some examples of articles that have been written by people just like you may be found below:

- 1) Fostering Healthy Communities: Lessons Learned from CDC's Premier Community-Based Interventions, 10(2), 2009 Suppl of *Health Promotion Practice*. http://hpp.sagepub.com/content/vol10/2_suppl/
- 2) WISEWOMAN Works: Vol. 1(2003): A Collection of Success Stories From Program Inception through 2002. http://www.cdc.gov/wisewoman/pdf/success_stories.pdf. Vol. 2(2005): A Collection of Success Stories on Empowering Women to Stop Smoking. http://www.cdc.gov/wisewoman/pdf/vol_2/success_stories_vol2.pdf
- 3) Moore, E.S. (2007). Perspectives on Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity. Special section of *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 22(2):157-242. <http://www.atypon-link.com/AMA/doi/pdf/10.1509/jppm.26.2.157>

1) Dixon, N. (2001). Writing for publication-A guide for new authors. *Inter'J Quality in Health Care*, 15(5):417-21.

2) Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. (2009). Designing Rafts Writing Assignments. <http://doe.sd.gov/curriculum/6plus1/docs/educators/docs/RAFTS.pdf>

3) Thompson, PJ. How to choose the right journal for your manuscript. (2007). *Chest*, 32; 1073-76.



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