



#4: Navigating the Publication Process

Now that your final draft is ready and properly formatted, do one last review using this checklist as a guide:

Write a short cover letter that thanks the editors for reading your paper, briefly explains your project, and includes your credentials. Many papers are submitted electronically; the process varies with each journal, so follow directions carefully.

Checklist for Publication:

- ✓ Is subject important to others, specific & well defined?
- ✓ Are purpose & objectives clearly outlined?
- ✓ Have you researched the literature & provided proper citations & accurate summary?
- ✓ Was original research or replication of project carried out properly?
- ✓ Was permission obtained to use materials from other authors/journals?
- ✓ Are methods/tools appropriate & clearly described?
- ✓ Do you have relevant findings to present? Are figures/tables clear?
- ✓ Have you analyzed & interpreted findings correctly?
Do conclusions follow from results?
- ✓ Have you noted limitations or ethical concerns?
Did any positive or unintended actions result?
- ✓ Did you learn any lessons that would be valuable to share with others?

How Does the Review Process Work?

Review may take from 3-6 months, so don't be discouraged. The journal editor selects 2-3 reviewers for each paper who are experts in the subject area, may be cited in the work and are not mentioned in the acknowledgements. Reviewers use a written set of criteria and rating system for their review. The papers are assigned to the reviewers as "blinded", that is, the reviewer does not have access to the author(s) name or contact information. The editor makes the final decision on whether or not the paper is published, based on reviewers' recommendations. The following categories of recommendations are generally used: Accept; Revise and resubmit (or Accept with Minor or Major Revisions); or Reject.

Accept: Since this rarely occurs on the first submission, this is a cause for celebration!

Revise and Resubmit: After reading the reviewers'/editor's comments, receive them in the spirit of constructive criticism. Experienced authors will tell you that most papers they revise are better after the revision. The best course is to put the paper aside for a week or two and think about what is being asked of you. Then get to work and make the necessary changes. In a follow-up letter to the editor, specifically state how you corrected each deficiency. If you have good cause not to change a particular aspect of the paper, state why you believe you are correct or why it is not possible to make the suggested edit. Be polite and not defensive, but also don't be intimidated. You will receive galley proofs shortly before publication that must be carefully checked for accuracy and returned within 24-48 hours of receipt. You may not make major edits, only correct errors.

What if My Paper Gets Rejected?

Even accomplished authors must learn to deal with rejection. The best course of action is to wait for a couple of weeks, then really consider the reviewers' comments. Hopefully, you will decide to use the valuable feedback you received to revise your paper and resubmit to another journal. This is a competitive process and your chances will improve over time.

Basic Writing Skills Checklist

Structure

- ✓ Title - specific; include key words that enhance referencing later
- ✓ Abstract – short summary of article
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Emphasize relevance of topic to make reader want to know more
- ✓ End with statement of purpose
- ✓ Background - set the stage
- ✓ Review of relevant literature
- ✓ Methods (if applicable)
- ✓ Results (if applicable)
- ✓ Discussion of results; limitations & biases
- ✓ Conclusion

Style

- ✓ Make concepts clear to those unfamiliar with the topic
- ✓ Explain ideas not universally known or accepted
- ✓ Use precise language to communicate meaning
- ✓ Spell out acronyms & avoid jargon
- ✓ Make pronoun references clear, avoid passive voice
- ✓ Avoid broad generalizations

Flow

- ✓ Label sections of paper with headers
- ✓ Create transitions between sections
- ✓ Break down complex ideas in section into paragraphs that proceed from general to specific
- ✓ Open each paragraph with strong topic sentence that prepares reader for what will follow
- ✓ Develop interrelations among sentences in paragraph with details and examples
- ✓ Conclude paragraph by restating major point reader might have forgotten
- ✓ Create smooth transitions between paragraphs in each section

Credibility

- ✓ Demonstrate command of subject to establish credibility and expertise
- ✓ Support claims with references from reputable, recent sources
- ✓ Provide research support for all theoretical claims
- ✓ Adhere to Style manual standards

Lunney, M., & Alward, R. (2007). *Guidelines for writing scholarly papers: Handbook for graduate students, 3rd Ed.* New York: Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing.



This resource, others, and more information are available at: www.sophe.org