

Choosing the right journal

Why is it important to choose the right journal?

Choose the right journal and you can have an easy publication process and have your work read by a large and interested audience. Choose the wrong journal and you face difficult rewrites (or even rejection) and an unappreciative audience.

Making the wrong decision regarding where to submit your manuscript is likely to cost you valuable time and effort, and in some cases, money. It may mean your article being rejected, sometimes before peer review, even though it is scientifically sound and contributes to the field. As well as wasting time and effort, these rejections can also make you lose confidence in your work and abilities.

How to choose the right journal?

Choosing the right journal can seem like a difficult task – after all there are over 20,000 different journals to choose from with more added every year. However, with a few steps you can significantly increase your chances of making a good decision.

Although the decision on where to publish ultimately lies with you and your co-authors, it can be very helpful to involve others in the process. Ask colleagues and collaborators in your field for their opinions and suggestions and be open to ideas contrary to your own

Below there are two tools to help you choose the right journal - a list of criteria to use and also a selection of online 'journal finders' – but before using those there are three important preparatory steps -

1. Know your article well
2. Know your field well
3. Research key journals

Know your article well – it sounds easy but is often overlooked.

- Be clear on the focus of your article
- Understand who is the target audience
- Know the facts about your article –e.g. its length and type
- Be aware of the scope of your study or findings
- Be able to identify articles similar to yours

Know your field well – to know where to publish you need to know what and where others are publishing.

- Be familiar with published studies that are similar to yours
- Keep update with new publication opportunities
- Have an understanding of who are key authors and reviewers
- Read as widely as you can

Research key journals – knowing the details of the most likely places to publish provides a framework to build on.

- Read everything on the “Information for Authors” and “About the Journal” pages
- Develop an understanding of what different journals are looking for

- Create short summaries for yourself about each journal
- Learn about any upcoming special issues or features

Criteria to help choose a journal

These five criteria will help you make better, more informed decisions on where to submit your article.

1. Topic
 - a. Does the topic of your article fit the journal's mission statement?
 - b. Does your study align with what the journal prioritizes?
 - c. Has the journal published articles that are similar (not only in topic but scope too) to yours?
2. Audience
 - a. Is your article suitable for a national, regional or an international audience?
 - b. Will researchers in related fields be interested in your study?
 - c. Do you want to reach a specialist or a broad audience?
3. Type of Article
 - a. Does the journal accept the type of article you have written?
 - b. Does your article fit within the word count restrictions of the journal?
 - c. Is your article in the structure used by the journal?
4. Reputation
 - a. Is the Impact Factor appropriate for your work?
 - b. Do key researchers in your field publish in the journal?
 - c. Are the journal editors respected?
5. Practical considerations
 - a. What is the acceptance rate?
 - b. How long will it take to get published?
 - c. What is the open access fee?

Online tools to help choose a journal

There are a selection of online tools to help you choose the right journal for your article. Three of the best free ones are summarized below. These tools work best with abstracts rather than just keywords.

Each tool will give you a list of options. *Elsevier Journal Finder* and *Journal Author Name Estimator* also give you a suggestion on which journals they consider the best fit.

It's important to remember that although these tools are good, much better than a simple search tool, they are not a replacement for a person! Use the suggestions as a strong place to start your decision making from but do not let them make the decision for you.

Name	Website	Features
Elsevier Journal Finder	journalfinder.elsevier.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses abstract and title • Only checks Elsevier journals • Includes acceptance rates • Gives useful extra info, including Impact Factor

Journal Author Name Estimator (JANE)	jane.biosemantics.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses abstract and title or keywords • Checks all journals • Includes confidence levels and direct links to similar articles • Gives limited other info, doesn't use Impact Factor
Edanz Journal Selector	www.edanzediting.com/journal-selector (Choose abstract/keywords from dropdown menu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses abstract, excerpt and/or keywords • Checks all journals • Includes easy to read results • Gives Impact and Journal Description only

Further reading

www.editage.com/insights/how-to-choose-journals-for-submitting-your-paper

www.biomedcentral.com/getpublished/find-the-right-journal

www.aje.com/en/arc/choosing-right-journal-your-research/

journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=1085393 (How To Choose the Right Journal for Your Manuscript)

www.timeshighereducation.com/news/how-to-choose-the-right-journal-for-your-paper/2016478.article

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest other topics for our Learning Center please email mahidol.tropmed@gmail.com.

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