

Writing for Publication: Keys to Success

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Objectives

1. Review good writing habits.
2. Describe the key elements in the preparation of publishable manuscript.
3. Identify 10 top reasons why manuscripts are not accepted.
4. Identify resources that contribute to a successful writing outcome.



Good Writing Habits

- ✓ Disciplined, passionate, persistent, determined, patient, “can do attitude”
- ✓ 4 Cs – clear, concise, coherent, correct
- ✓ Write ideas down – create file of “best ideas”
- ✓ Be familiar with the current literature and “hot” topics



Good Writing Habits

- ✓ Recognize the art of writing is rewriting
- ✓ Avoid slang, jargon, colloquial language
- ✓ Write when most productive and creative – need a conducive writing situation
- ✓ Set deadlines and divide content into manageable sections



Targeting your manuscript

- Identify potential journals to consider.
- Determine audience (readership), acceptance rate, policies, frequency of publication, expected time from submission until review.



Targeting your manuscript

- Examine journal trends in the last year according to type of manuscripts (e.g., research, current issues, clinical practice, etc).
- Determine if journal has special issues, the topics, and when scheduled.



Important points when preparing a manuscript

- *Identify the right topic for the targeted journal.*
- Determine authorship, order of authors, and contributions of each.



Important points when preparing a manuscript

- Recognize that rewriting and editing are always expected even for experienced authors.
- Realize that organization of content and flow is essential.



Important points when preparing a manuscript

- Attention to detail is essential.
 - a. *Information for authors – preparation guidelines (i.e., mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rnj)*
 - b. *Page limitations*
 - c. *Format style – APA, MLA, other*
 - d. *Tables and figures – frequently expected, but don't over use – follow format guidelines*



So How Do You Get Started?

Write a brief description of your idea.

- In one sentence, clearly state your idea or focus.
- Then describe in a few sentences why this topic is important and the specific gap that your manuscript will fill in the literature.

Then ask a valued colleague or research team member to briefly respond to your manuscript idea.



Manuscript Development Phases

1. Plan
2. Write
3. Revise



Planning Phase

- Develop your idea (i.e., make more targeted).
- Further review the literature and critically evaluate what has been done to support your premise that there is a distinct gap that needs to be filled.
- Consider collaborating with colleagues as joint authors – just be clear who is the first author and determine responsibilities of each before writing starts.



Planning Phase

- Obtain the author guidelines from the journal (Critical Care Nurse, American Journal of Critical Care, etc.).
- Send a query letter to the journal editor to receive feedback regarding topic.
- Establish achievable timelines (i.e., 2-3 months written and submitted).



Writing Phase

- Determine the most appropriate format for your manuscript and develop an outline.

Example: Present research findings

*Introduction - problem, purpose, background, significance
Method – sample, data collection process, data analysis, human rights*

*Results - demographic, research questions/hypotheses
Discussion – meaning, relate back to framework, limitations
Implications to practice and next steps*



Writing Phase

- Identify clear goals on what the manuscript will accomplish.

Examples:

- a. Describe evidence-based interventions to manage a patient who is cognitively impaired and aggressive.
- b. Report the key factors that contribute to admission of CHF patients within 30 days of discharge.
- c. Describe the development of a stroke rehabilitation center: A pioneering experience in building, staffing, and training.



Writing Phase

- Get your ideas written down.
start with key points, make sure that you have 2-3 hours of uninterrupted time to do this
- Do not plagiarize.
self or others (a growing problem)
- Use plain language, correct terminology, be very attentive to details.
(follow Author Guidelines, check citations, keep track of all references, ask permission if use photographs, diagrams, etc.)



Revising Initial Draft

1. Structure

- Is the title of the manuscript accurate, succinct reflect the content, and stimulate to read?
- Is the abstract clear, consistent with the text, contain what is requested, and stipulated length?
- Is anything missing or redundant?



Revising Initial Draft

- Do data in the narrative and tables match?
- Are references correct, properly cited, current?
- Is there excessive use of tables and figures?
- Are content and structure requirements fulfilled?
- Are abbreviations written out the first time?



Revising Initial Draft

2. **Clarity** - understood in first reading
3. **Brevity** - avoid excess words & sentences (fewer words are almost always better; shorter sentences)
4. **Correct grammar and verb tense**



Revising Initial Draft

5. Use bias free language

Person with a disability rather than disabled person; avoid "he" or "she"



Strategies to Keep You Writing

- Obtain the needed resources (i.e., time, equipment, library, etc.) to support your effort.
- Set realistic timelines, but revise as needed.
- Work in a comfortable environment that limits interruptions and distractions.
- May want to write with a peer or mentor.
- Join or start a writing or reading club.



Strategies to Keep You Writing

- Work smart – link writing with a presentation or other related activity.
- Reduce manuscript to major sections.
- Don't get stuck with literature review
- Reward yourself for each minor progress.



Strategies to Keep You Writing

- Identify your own personal cheerleaders who can encourage you "prn."
- Writing is a skill and takes time to develop.
- You have something important to say!
- Even if you receive a rejection letter (**all of us receive them!**), review comments and keep revising.



Successful writing involves revising even for experienced writers!



Prepare your manuscript, and then submit it

(Remember that no manuscript is perfect)



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Author and Editor Interactions

- Send a query email.
- Editor knows “hot topics” wanted, what manuscripts are in the review process, and those that are accepted.
- Establish a relationship with the editor or managing editor.
- Don’t be defensive about your work. **Accept criticism well and edit accordingly.**

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Top 10 reasons why manuscripts are rejected

10. Plagiarism, copyright or other ethical issues
9. Sloppy, poorly organized, ideas don’t flow (*requires too much editorial effort to make into publishable quality*)
8. No references or very dated ones (most >5 years old) when many current ones exist

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Top 10 reasons why manuscript are rejected

7. Not responsive to editor’s recommendations regarding how to improve the manuscript
6. Broad generalizations with no support
5. Research not clearly described
4. Weak interpretation of findings or over stating the interpretation of data

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Top 10 reasons why manuscript are rejected

3. Poor research design – affects data quality
2. Nothing new is introduced
1. **Irrelevant topic** (low interest to journal)

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Maintain Your Momentum!

- Include a letter with your revised manuscript that specifically describes how you responded to each point requiring refinement.
- Prompt action makes a great impression and can improve your chances of getting published.
- Do not be passive aggressive in response.

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References

Once Found Never Let Them Go



- **Compile references as you go along**
Saves **lots** of work!
- **Photocopy title and copyright pages of references**

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Helpful Resources

Writing

Alley, M. (2009). *The craft of scientific writing* (3rd ed.). New York: Springer.

Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2008). *The elements of style*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Allyn & Bacon. – reissued

Johnston, M. (2004). *Effective writing for health professionals: A practical guide to getting published*. New York: Routledge

Oerman, M. H. (2002). *Writing for publication in nursing*. New York: Lippincott. 6/2010 new edition

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Helpful Resources

Pierce, L. (2009). Writing for Publication: you can do it! *Rehabilitation Nursing*, 34 (1), 3-8.

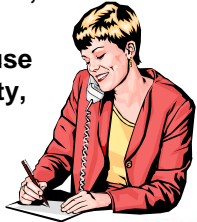
Miller, E., & Lewis, K. D. (2008). Bridging the gap between poster and manuscript. *Rehabilitation Nursing*, 33(2), 52-54.

Rig, M. (2009). *Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing*. St. Johns University
http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/roiq_st_johns/

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The “Write” Time

- Is anytime that you can find, anywhere.
- You are here today because you have the desire, ability, and motivation to make it happen
- **Write!**



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