



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

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**Amsterdam School of Communication Research / ASCoR**

# **Helpful tips on how to get published in journals**

**Peter Neijens**



# What you should consider *before* submitting a paper



## In general

- Publishing is as much a social as an intellectual process!
- Know the standards and expectations
- Learn to think like a reviewer
- Think of publishing as persuasive communication
- Be aware of tricks, but also of pitfalls



# Preliminary questions

- Why publish?
- Basic decisions: authorship, responsibilities, publication types
- Judging the quality of your paper
- Finding the “right” outlet



# Why publish?

## Discursive argument

- Innovative contribution
- Of interest to the scientific community

## Strategic argument

- Publish or perish
- Issue ownership
- Visibility

# Authorship

## **Inclusion – who is an author?**

- All involved in the work of paper writing
- All involved in the work necessary for the paper to be written
- All involved in funding/ grants that made the study possible

## **Order – who is first author?**

- The person who wrote the paper
- The one who did most of the work for the study
- The person that masterminded the paper
- The most senior of the researchers

# Responsibilities

## Hierarchical approach

- First author masterminds and writes the paper
- Second author contributes analyses, writes smaller parts
- Third author edits, comments, advises

## Egalitarian approach

- All authors equally share the work: alphabetical order
- Authors alternate with first authorship in different papers



## Publication plan

- Quantity or quality
- Aiming low or high
- Timing
- Topic sequence
- Focus: least publishable unit (LPU)





## LPU / MPU

Least publishable unit (LPU) or minimum publishable unit (MPU) is the smallest amount of information that can generate a publication in a peer-reviewed journal

# Books

- High prestige in qualitative field
- Room for development of detailed, encompassing perspective
- May also reach lay audience
- Less constraints (space, writing style, format)
- Visibility may be low
- Sloppy publisher
- High costs
- Lacking advertising and accessibility

## Book chapters

- Allow for more theory-based pieces, summaries
- Sometimes room for creative, but somewhat speculative ideas
- Generally lower prestige than articles
- Can be “golden grave” for research
- Time lag submission chapter – publication book
- Editor, Publisher
- Other authors in the book

## Articles

- Highest prestige in quantitative field
- Highest visibility and chance to be read in academia
- Very often data required, pure theory pieces hardly publishable
- Leave little room for more elaborate theorizing, method development
- Can be time-consuming, frustrating trajectory



## Quality of your paper: relevance

- Theoretical relevance
- Methodological relevance
- Empirical relevance
- Practical relevance

## Quality of your paper: execution

- Introduction: rationale appropriate, convincing?
- Theory review: encompassing, but focused?
- Procedure and methods: adequate, rigorous, and up-to-date?
- Results: transparent, easy to follow, an answer to research question?
- Discussion: putting results into perspective?

# Quality of your paper: form

## Structure

- Transparent
- Coherent
- Logical

## Reasoning

- Clear
- Consistent
- Parsimonious

## Expression

- Precise
- Simple
- Economical



## Ways to find out about the quality of your paper

- Feedback from colleagues
- Reviews of similar papers
- Comparison with similar articles just published
- Comparison with most important papers in the field



## Do's and dont's in paper writing

- Place your paper in the right context of research developments
- Focus on one selling point
- Emphasize the quality of your work, but do it modestly
- Criticize ideas, but do it with empathy
- Never direct criticism *ad personam*!
- Be precise, but don't become pedantic
- Be simple, but not simplistic



# Submission process: choice of the right journal

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- Discipline – Field – Focus/ Orientation
- Quality
  - ✓ Reputation
  - ✓ Impact of articles published (*not* the same as impact factor!)
  - ✓ Rejection rates
- Outlet for similar articles
- Number of issues/ year
- Circulation, availability, readership



# Impact factor

- ISI (Institute for Scientific Information; now part of Thomson Scientific) publishes the ISI citation indexes in print and compact disc. They are now generally accessed through the Web under the name Web of Science, which is in turn part of the group of databases in the Web of Knowledge.
- Impact factor of a journal in a given year is the average number of citations received per paper published in that journal during the two preceding years. For example, if a journal has an impact factor of 3 in 2011, then its papers published in 2009 and 2010 received 3 citations each on average.

# Submission process: choice of the right journal

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# Submission process: choice of the right journal

- Editor, Editorial board, Reviewers
- Submission: Paper or online?
- Standards
  - ✓ Length of articles
  - ✓ Citation style
- Review process
  - ✓ Number of reviewers
  - ✓ Number of review rounds
  - ✓ Turnaround time
- Time lag acceptance - publication

JCR-Web 4.5 Journal Summary List - Windows Internet Explorer

http://admin-apps.isiknowledge.com/JCR/JCR?RQ=LIST\_SUMMARY\_JOURNAL

Google Zoeken Bladwijzers Spelling controleren Vertalen Automatisch aanvull...

Favorieten Naamloze afspraak vraag iGoogle Meer invoegtoepassing...

JCR-Web 4.5 Journal Summary List

Journals 1 - 20 (of 112)

Navigation icons: back, forward, search, etc.

MARK ALL UPDATE MARKED LIST

Ranking is based on your journal and s

Mark	Rank	Abbreviated Journal Title <i>(linked to journal information)</i>	ISSN	JCR		
				Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<a href="#">POLIT ANAL</a>	1047-1987	757	3.756	4.083
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<a href="#">AM POLIT SCI REV</a>	0003-0554	7507	3.207	4.194
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<a href="#">ANNU REV POLIT SCI</a>	1094-2939	760	2.619	3.206
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<a href="#">AM J POLIT SCI</a>	0092-5853	5239	2.554	3.793
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<a href="#">J PEACE RES</a>	0022-3433	1529	2.468	2.677
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<a href="#">POLIT GEOGR</a>	0962-6298	1235	2.267	2.729
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<a href="#">SCAND POLIT STUD</a>	0080-6757	348	2.186	1.644
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<a href="#">EUR UNION POLIT</a>	1465-1165	454	1.979	2.250
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<a href="#">J POLIT</a>	0022-3816	2994	1.805	2.269
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<a href="#">AFR AFFAIRS</a>	0001-9909	550	1.660	1.779
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<a href="#">GOVERNANCE</a>	0952-1895	689	1.646	2.240
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	<a href="#">INT STUD QUART</a>	0020-8833	1363	1.625	2.459
<input type="checkbox"/>	13	<a href="#">PUBLIC OPIN QUART</a>	0033-362X	2968	1.588	3.301
<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<a href="#">EUR J POLIT RES</a>	0304-4130	2086	1.518	2.689
<input type="checkbox"/>	15	<a href="#">J CONFLICT RESOLUT</a>	0022-0027	2410	1.507	3.015

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JCR-Web 4.5 Journal Summary List

**Journals 1 - 20 (of 55)**

Navigation icons: back, forward, search, etc.

MARK ALL UPDATE MARKED LIST

Ranking is based on your journal and s

Mark	Rank	Abbreviated Journal Title <i>(linked to journal information)</i>	ISSN	JCR		
				Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<a href="#">J COMPUT-MEDIAT COMM</a>	1083-6101	1279	3.639	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<a href="#">J COMMUN</a>	0021-9916	2188	2.415	2.765
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<a href="#">HUM COMMUN RES</a>	0360-3989	1466	2.200	2.482
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<a href="#">PUBLIC UNDERST SCI</a>	0963-6625	670	1.981	2.124
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<a href="#">CYBERPSYCHOL BEHAV</a>	1094-9313	1940	1.591	2.472
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<a href="#">PUBLIC OPIN QUART</a>	0033-362X	2968	1.588	3.301
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<a href="#">PERS RELATIONSHIP</a>	1350-4126	1023	1.385	1.917
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<a href="#">COMMUN RES</a>	0093-6502	1795	1.354	2.324
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<a href="#">J HEALTH COMMUN</a>	1081-0730	1010	1.344	2.434
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<a href="#">NEW MEDIA SOC</a>	1461-4448	614	1.326	1.817
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<a href="#">MEDIA PSYCHOL</a>	1521-3269	430	1.321	1.725
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	<a href="#">DISCOURSE SOC</a>	0957-9265	786	1.300	1.623
<input type="checkbox"/>	13	<a href="#">POLIT COMMUN</a>	1058-4609	742	1.282	2.018
<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<a href="#">HEALTH COMMUN</a>	1041-0236	729	1.277	1.601





# How to handle reviews and editorial letters?

# The Peer Review System

## Submission

- Target a journal
- Write a paper according to format journal (APA style)
- Ask comments from colleague/supervisor
- Have the paper edited by a native speaker
- Write submission letter and send it off

## Review procedure

- Editor acknowledges receipt
- Reviewers are contacted
- Editor receives reviews back
- Editor writes decision letter (rejection, resubmission with minor/major reviews, acceptance w/ (minor) revisions)



## The Peer Review System-cont.

### Result

- Most common: rejection; if lucky: resubmission
- Rewrite the paper
- Write cover letter and memorandum detailing changes



## Submission letter

Dear Dr. Neijens,

Please find enclosed four copies of our manuscript entitled: “*Title*,” coauthored by *co-author*, which we would like to submit to the International Journal of Public Opinion Research.

We look forward to your reaction.

Sincerely,



## Letter to the Editor

- Be formal and respectful
- Include your e-mail, fax, tel. number, and postal address
- Are the journal editor's name and address current?
- Do not try to "sell" the paper in the submission letter
- Check the manuscript thoroughly (typos, tables, pages).
- Closely follow submission guidelines (e.g., paper not previously published, not under concurrent consideration elsewhere)



# Acknowledgment of receipt

Dear Dr. Jones,

We received your manuscript entitled "Title" today. Thank you for considering the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* for your work. We will be making a processing decision shortly. Should the manuscript meet our initial guidelines, we will then send it out for review. You should expect to hear from us within 8 to 12 weeks time.

If you have any questions please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Marijn van Klingeren

Editorial Assistant, "International Journal of Public Opinion Research"



## If you do not hear from the editor...

- 3-4 months is common
- 6-9 months is excessive but can occur
- whatever you do, be careful not to offend the editor
- depending on the promised review time, send a polite reminder



## Example of reminder

Dear Dr. Neijens,

I sincerely apologize that I am troubling you with this, but I am a bit anxious to hear about our paper "*Title*". The paper has been under review at the International Journal of Public Opinion Research for 5 months. I was wondering whether you are already able to provide us with some feedback about the status of the manuscript.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,



# Decision letter (from the Editor)

Usually (but not always):

- clearly provides an editorial decision
  - rejection (*most frequent outcome*)
  - resubmission with major (*common*) or minor changes (*rare*)
  - acceptance with (*minor*) revisions (*is a miracle*)
- identifies the major problems of the paper
- specifies how authors need to proceed with the paper
- set a time frame for revision
- specifies how editor will proceed with revised paper  
(in-house review; back to one or more reviewers; new reviewers)



# Decision Letter

Dear Dr. XXX,

We have now received the reviews of your manuscript "*Title*" which you submitted to the International Journal of Public Opinion Research. The reviews are enclosed.

As you will see, the reviewers see merit in your work, but also suggest some revisions to your manuscript. Following the reviewers' suggestions and my own reading, I would like to invite you to resubmit your paper in a revised version taking into account the criticism.

Please let me summarise the major concerns of the reviewers.

.....HERE SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS.

These concerns are the most important issues, but the reviewers mention also other issues that are worthwhile to consider in a revised version.



## Decision Letter (cont.)

When you resubmit your manuscript in a revised version, please make sure that your manuscript follows the instructions to authors:

[http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/intpor/for\\_authors/index.html](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/intpor/for_authors/index.html)

When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to the comments made by the reviewers in the space provided. You can use this space to document any changes you make to the original manuscript. In order to expedite the processing of the revised manuscript, please be as specific as possible in your response to the reviewers. These responses will be viewed by the reviewers, so they should be anonymized.



## Decision Letter (cont.)

Resubmission is not a guarantee of acceptance. If you decide to resubmit, a second round of reviewing will be necessary. Please let me know your intention as regards resubmission in any event.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

Dr. Peter Neijens

Editor-in-Chief

International Journal of Public Opinion Research

[ijpor@uva.nl](mailto:ijpor@uva.nl)



## Decision Letter (cont.)

Reviewers' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

This is a nicely written manuscript and one that is admirably succinct. Substantively, the topic is an important one. Unfortunately, however, I think the manuscript falls significantly short of making its point.

The essential argument of the paper is .....



# Reviews

- May range from 1 paragraph to 5 pages
- Often divided into substantive comments and minor suggestions
- Ought to be constructive, preferably detailing ways to improve the ms, literature to add, etc. (often not the case).



## How to respond (1)?

- Before you start, wait a few days
- Assess whether resubmission is worth-while or look for an alternative journal
- Assess what changes need to be made and how much time it will take
- Write editor if you plan to revise; provide time schedule for resubmission.
- Start with analytical problems; theoretical parts are inherently adjustable



## How to respond (2)?

- Take all criticisms very seriously
- As a rule, plan to deal with everything the editor suggested
- As a rule, also respond to all criticism of the reviewers
- In case of inconsistencies, follow the editor; if necessary contact the editor
- Be strategic:
  - if you disagree completely, give reviewer always something to be satisfied with. Give the reviewer a compliment when deserved
  - if you have an idea who the reviewers are, cite them
  - be aware of sensitive issues (e.g., battles, camps in the literature)





# Resubmission: letter + memorandum

- Resubmission package consists of two parts:
  - cover letter to the editor
  - memorandum (point-by-point responses as to how you address the problems raised by the editor reviewers).
- First summarize each comment by the editor and reviewers; then respond to the comment
- Number the comments of editor and reviewers (some reviewers raise the same issue)
- Always refer to pages and/or paragraphs where you made revisions in the ms



## Example

Dear Dr. Neijens,

Pleased find enclosed our revised manuscript “*Title*”. We have first addressed the points raised by you, and then those by reviewer A and reviewer B.

We would like to express our gratitude for the comments made by you and the reviewers. We believe that the critiques on our initial manuscript have certainly improved the quality of our paper.

With best wishes,

Author



# Not so!

**Dear Journal Editor, It's Me Again**

**By Roy F. Baumeister**

**Today's date**

**Dear Sir, Madame, or Other:**

**Enclosed is our latest version of MS# XX-XXX-XX-, that is, the re-re-re-revised revision of our paper. Choke on it. We have again rewritten the entire manuscript from start to finish. We even changed the goddamn running head! Hopefully we have suffered enough by now to satisfy even you and your bloodthirsty reviewers.**

**(.....)**

**Sincerely**

**Your name here**



# Memorandum, page 1

## Editors' suggestions

1. As you suggested, we have changed the abstract. We now more clearly list the aims of our study, and added some developmental descriptives (see p. 2).
  
2. As you suggested, we have included effect sizes (e.g.,  $\eta^2$  for ANOVAs, z-values for betas, confidence intervals for RSMEA, and percentage of explained variance for the SEM) in the results section (see p. 20, 3rd par.).
  
3. You (and reviewer B) regret the lack of international focus in our study. We entirely agree with this concern and have dealt with this concern in different respects:
  - (a) ...
  - (b) ...
  - (c)...



# Memorandum, page 2

## Reviewer A

Reviewer A is very positive about our manuscript, and about the data and analyses on which it is based. The reviewer has only two minor suggestions for improvement:

1. Reviewer A would like to see us state our hypotheses and present a justification for each. In the revised version of the manuscript, we have more explicitly stated our hypotheses. Although the literature hardly allows of directional hypotheses, there is a tendency towards negative relationships between identity experiments and social competence/self-concept unity. We have included three effects hypotheses about the influence of identity experiments on social competence and self-concept clarity, and two hypotheses on the effects of social anxiety and loneliness on adolescents' tendency to experiment with their identity when being online (see pp 8 and 9 of the revised manuscript).
2. Reviewer A.....

# Memorandum, page 3

## Reviewer B

Reviewer B believes that our manuscript is nicely presented and that our study is interesting and important. We have addressed the reviewer's suggestions for improvement in the following ways:

1. The reviewer thinks that our paper lacks a strong theoretical basis. The reviewer states that the hypotheses are not forwarded as predictions. This point was also raised by reviewer A (see point 1 reviewer A). In the revised version, we have incorporated directional hypotheses, and more explicitly stated the assumptions that underlie our hypotheses (see pp. 8 and 9). We believe that the suggestions of the reviewer have certainly improved the theoretical parts of our paper.
2. The reviewer would like to see more information on the recruitment procedure of our respondents. We have added two paragraphs on how the respondents were approached by the agency, and how they took the survey. As suggested by the reviewer, we also included more explicit information on the extent to which our sample was representative of the Dutch population who used the Internet (see page 11-12).



# Accepted!

Dear Dr. Jones,

Thank you very much for the revised version of your paper "*Title*" and the accompanying letter in which you detailed how you changed the paper in response to the reviewers' suggestions and critique.

You have done a very good job with the revisions and therefore it is a great pleasure for me to accept your manuscript in its current form for publication in the International Journal of Public Opinion Research.

Thank you for your fine contribution. On behalf of the Editors of the International Journal of Public Opinion Research, we look forward to your continued contributions to the Journal.

Kind regards,

Dr. Peter Neijens

Editor-in-Chief, International Journal of Public Opinion Research