

How to write a paper for a scientific journal

– or what are editors really looking for?

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Science can be hard to read and understand, born out of the complexity of scientific concepts, data and analysis. But complexity of thought need not lead to impenetrability of expression. Improving the quality of writing may improve the quality of thought and the quality of the science. Proper preparation and construction also aid the review process.

What is the peer review process and what are editors looking for? Which journal should one select? How should one respond to reviewer comments? How should I start, especially if my mother tongue is not English? These are all questions that have to be addressed as part of writing for an academic journal.

Insights from the perspective of an active journal Editor-in-Chief (*Weed Research*; ISI Impact factor 2.033) may be helpful for postgraduates, postdocs and others.

A number of teaching options are available, ranging from a 1 hour seminar to a full day's course or longer. Interaction with attendees using pre-submitted draft papers is encouraged for longer courses.

Example course plan

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Why publish? When to publish? And where to publish?
3. The peer review process – what is it?
4. The structure of a paper:
Title page, Summary, Keywords, Introduction, Materials & Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgements, References, Tables, Figures, Appendices, Supplementary information
5. Should I do the research and then write or the other way around?
6. Discussion of example papers
7. Writing English – good and bad practice
8. The science of statistics and data presentation
9. Responding to reviewers
10. The final publication stages – copy-editing, proofs and reprints

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