

How to Select a Target Journal

Selecting a peer-review journal for your manuscript is an important decision that should be considered thoughtfully. There is much more to selecting a target journal than simply choosing the journal with the highest readership or impact factor. Selecting the right target journal for your manuscript really depends on finding a journal whose scope fits your field or research and whose publishing characteristics meet your needs.

Taking time to think about your publishing goals will help you base your selection on what you really hope to accomplish with each manuscript. Ideally, you should choose a target journal **before writing your manuscript**, so you can best tailor the format and content to match the types of articles the journal publishes.

Draw up a prioritized list of 3-5 potential target journals.

- 1. Discover high-impact journals that might be interested in your topic.**
 - Try out the "[Journal/Author Name Estimator](#)" (JANE), an online tool that generates a list of possible target journals based on an uploaded abstract or list of keywords.
- 2. Draw up a prioritized list of 3-5 target journals and assess the relevance of your research topic.**
 - Is your manuscript topic and content within the scope of the journal?
 - Does the journal publish on this topic frequently, rarely, or not at all?
 - Is your manuscript written for a broad enough audience for this journal? Does it give readers sufficient context?
 - What are the types of articles (original research, essay, opinion piece) accepted by the journal – and does your manuscript fit within one of them?
 - What is the required word count for your type of article?
 - Beware of predatory journals. A predatory journal charges publication fees without a high-quality peer-review process. Recognize a predatory journal by looking closely at the journal's editor and staff. Review the journal's business. Check [Beall's List](#) of predatory journals and [Cabell's Whitelist](#) of qualified academic journals.

Narrow down target journal to the primary and the backup.

- 3. Which journal has the highest possible impact factor?**
 - A journal's impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. Essentially, the higher the impact factor—the better the journal. Most journals list their impact factor on their website.
- 4. Which journal has the largest possible audience?**
 - Your goal is to publish in a journal with the largest possible audience by ensuring that the journal is indexed. Many researchers use PubMed or other MEDLINE searches to find new articles in their fields, so publishing your work in an indexed journal will increase its chances of being read by other researchers in your field.
- 5. Which journal has the highest prestige?**
 - What are the readership and circulation statistics of the journal? Many journals publish their subscription rates and other reader statistics on their website. Publishing in journals with a larger readership may mean that your work will be seen and cited by more researchers.

6. **Does the journal offer open access or partial open access?**
 - Open access means that any readers who want to read your manuscript can access it free of charge, regardless of whether they subscribe to the journal. This may increase the visibility of your article, particularly among researchers at institutions that do not subscribe to every journal.
7. **What is the manuscript turnaround time? Acceptance/rejection rates? Quality of reviewer comments? Editors characteristics?**
 - Many journals publish an expected review turnaround time on their website. If you have a deadline or goal expectation, be sure to balance your desire for a highly prestigious journal with your preferred timeline to publish. Also, review your proposed target journal to ensure there are no scientific or personal conflicts with editorial board members.
8. **What do your colleagues and mentors recommend? Who has previous experience with publishing in the journal?**
 - Turn to your mentors and colleagues for advice about where to submit before you choose your target journal. Do a search on Web-of-Science within your target journal for colleagues who might have published in that journal previously. Ask them for insights on their experience with the journal.
9. **Does the journal charge an article processing charge (APC) or publication fee?**
 - An article processing charge (APC), also known as a publication fee, is a fee which is sometimes charged to authors to make a work available open access in either an open access journal or hybrid journal. This fee may be paid by the author, the author's institution, or their research funder.
10. **Does the journal offer pre-submission inquiries?**
 - Take advantage of the pre-submission inquiry process by sending a cover letter and abstract for the editor to read and consider whether the journal is interested in reviewing your manuscript. If you're still unsure if the article fits into the journal's scope, consider writing a brief, yet specific, email to the editor to ask whether the manuscript is something they would consider.