

# Getting Published: insights from a journal editor

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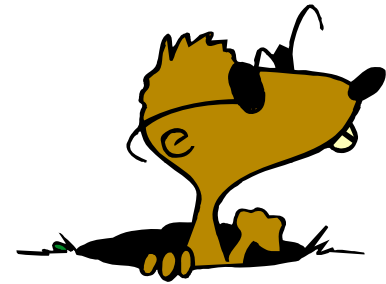
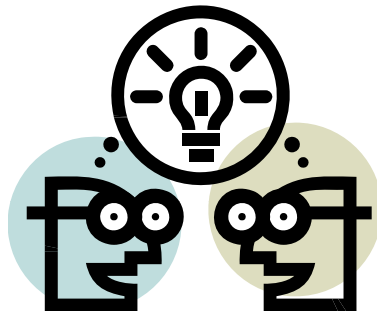
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<http://isb.sagepub.com/>

# Why should I consider publication?

- I have a **contribution** to make
  - the conventional wisdom is questionable
  - area requires theory extension / gap filling
  - this is novel work / empirical
- It is important for my **self-esteem**
  - My research is worthy!
- It is important for my **career**
  - eg. First job; future promotions 'publish or perish'
  - eg. future grant awards
- Publication is integral to the academic's role

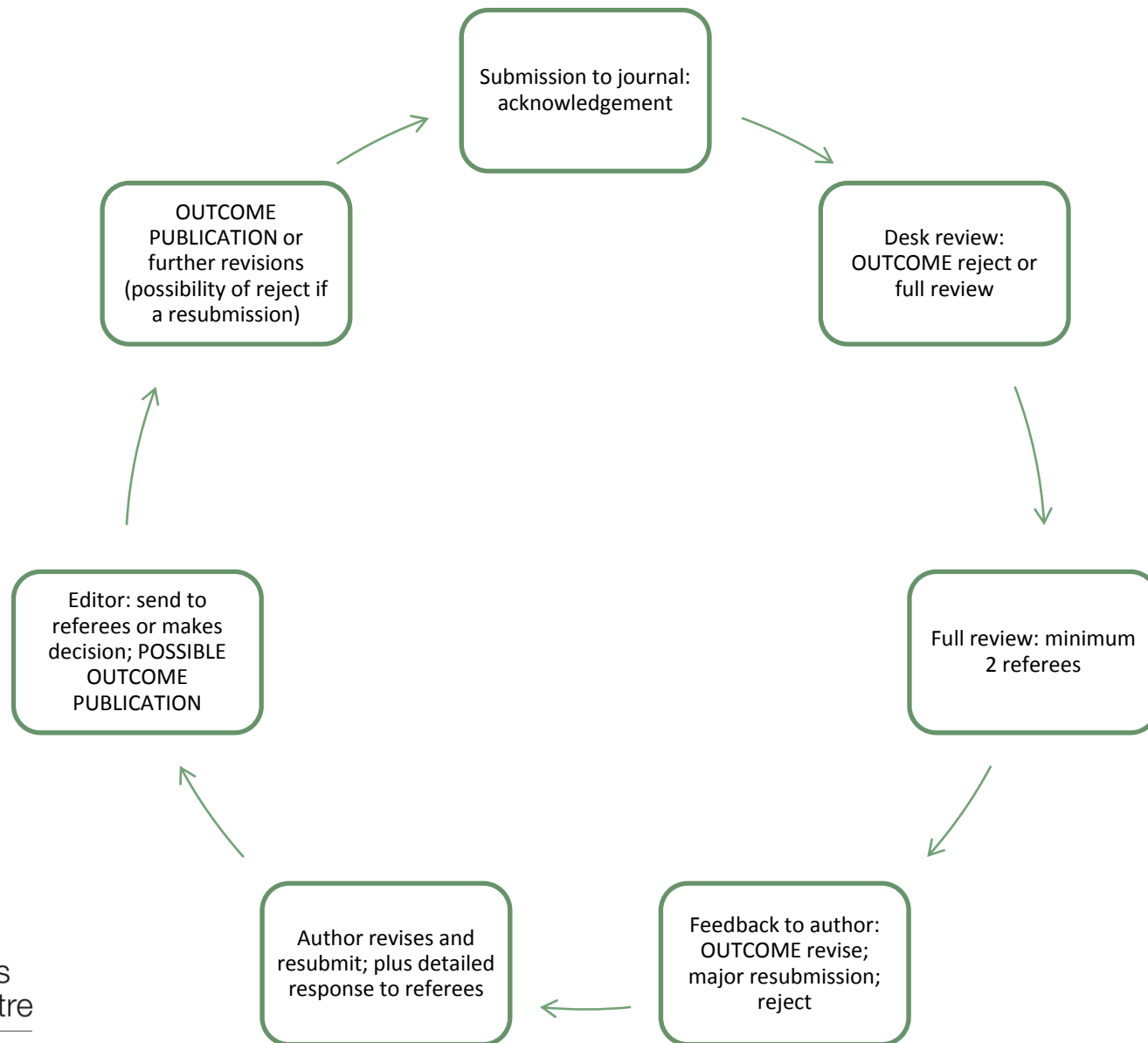
# Why should I consider publication?



Small Business  
Research Centre

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# The article submission process: drafting and crafting



# The purpose of the refereeing process

- Peer review involves papers submitted for scrutiny by experts in the field
- This is normally undertaken anonymously, impartially and honestly
- In order to satisfy these conditions, we draw upon a community of experts
  - Normally a minimum of 2 referees provide a report
  - Their role is advisory rather than deterministic
  - Editor mediates the process
- The editor(s) of the journal selects the reviewers
- Reviewing *takes time*, has been criticised as *slowing* down publication, potentially *elitist* and is a *voluntary* effort, so why bother?

# The purpose of the refereeing process

- Encourage '*fit*' with scope of the Journal
  - Ensure continuity and knowledge accumulation
- Improve the *academic rigour* of the paper
  - Maximise empirical or theoretical contribution
  - Encourage rigour and transparency of method
- Improve the *relevance* of the paper
  - Engage with debates and ensure stakeholder relevance
- Check for *appropriate style and clarity*
- Overall, this is a *developmental* process
- Outcome
  - a *permanent* publication

# Publishing in Journals: basic data

- Most journals publish journal statistics on www
- Around 50% rejected at **desk review stage**
- Of remaining 50%
  - > **Approx 20% published**
  - < Approx 80% not published
- Trend is for publication ***rate to decline***
  - Growth in submissions (252 submitted to ISBJ in 2010)
  - **9% acceptance rate**
  - Ease of submission: leads to speculative submissions

# Examples of types of submission

- Conversion of a **BIG** report or monograph or doctorate thesis
  - Risk of reject *high*:
  - too long; trying to do too much; discussion of the ‘project’; wonders of cut and paste; flow of discussion disjointed;
- An straight **conference** paper
  - Risk of reject *high*: not focused for journal; ‘work in progress’; not formatted for journal; published elsewhere
- Specially written for the Journal
  - Risk of reject: *low*
  - *Fit with genre of the Journal; engaged with debates; refers to previous work; helps editorial team*

# The mechanics of refereeing process

## 1. Submit your paper

- receive acknowledgement and reference number
- You can suggest external referees

## 2. Desk Review System

- Consulting Editor (CE) examines paper for appropriateness, rigour, fit
- CE recommends whether to go to full review

## 3 Full review process

- Three referees
- One from Editorial Board; two other 'experts' in field

## 4. Tracking progress

- system may be computerised and you should be able to track progress (as is ISBJ);
- if not remind Editor after a period – say three months
- ISBJ: 38 days current average time from submission to final decision

# Reasons for 'desk' rejection

Desk reject: 50% of submissions

- Poorly focused and or 'fit' with Journal objectives
- Another journal's reject
- Inadequate literature base; out of date; not linked to journal
- Obvious weak methods (eg low 'n' if quantitative; anecdotal)
- Poor analysis / contribution
- Not well rounded: beginning middle and end
- Inadequate English
- Not formatted for the journal: style; tables; sloppy
- ***It is important that your paper passes through this initial screening process..then to full review if appropriate***

# Reasons for ‘full review’ rejection

- Full review reject (50-80%+ of those passing desk review)
- Expert referees not convinced of *contribution* to knowledge base
  - ‘Fit’ with specific literature
  - Inadequate contribution to theory
- Methods *not robust* for high level journal
  - eg. low no. observations for quantitative paper
  - eg. transparency of qualitative methods
- Specific *sections* are *weak*
  - esp aims; conclusions

# Starting the submission process

1. Write for *the* Journal: is it the right one?
  - Examine lists of journals and impact factor
  - eg <http://www.the-abs.org.uk/?file=610>
  - Choose journal carefully
2. **Read** the aims and scope of the journal
  - Length, style; empirical or theoretical
  - Transparency of method
3. **Engage** with debates: build on previous papers
4. Submit your **best work** – not work in progress
5. Make it **interesting**/ what's the contribution?
6. No quick solutions....start writing from scratch

# What should my paper look like?

- Abstract (write this last)
- Introduction/ capture the reader's attention
- Discuss the literature
  - Identify the gap: empirical or theoretical?
  - Develop **specific objectives** and contribution
- Explain methods
  - Justify, **transparent** but avoid kitchen sink approach
  - A new lens on a topic; or a new topic?
- Analysis and discussion
  - **Link back to literature**. Anything counter-intuitive? Limitations?
- Conclusion and implications
  - Stick to your script; remind reader of aims and objectives
  - Don't merely repeat results; wider implications for subject; theory, practice and policy; but don't go beyond the evidence

# Handling revisions

- Cover issues raised *point by point; don't rush response*
- Demonstrate what you have done
  - Revise the paper
- Provide a point by point covering note to each referee and page number citations
  - Make it easy for them...to speed up the publication process
- If cannot meet all criticisms point out *why*
- Be positive / constructive
- Process can take 2 – 3 iterations
- Publication can take up to two years!

# Handling rejection

- Don't over react..
- Carefully read referees' reports and Editor's letter
- Try to focus on *why*
  - Ill focused? Wrong Journal? Fundamentally flawed? Or specific problem?
- Try and re-work the paper
- **Submit to an alternative Journal**
  - Needn't be of lower esteem
- But write for *a* Journal

# Good luck!!

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