

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD JOURNAL ARTICLE?

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# SUBJECT MATTER

- Does the dissertation address question(s) of interest to journal readers?
- Does the information assembled for the dissertation help usefully to answer those question(s)
  - Validity of methods
  - Statistical power

# TYPE OF RESEARCH

- Does not matter provided methods are appropriate to the study question(s) and ethical
- Possibilities include primary research (quantitative or qualitative) and secondary research (systematic review quantitative summary/meta-analysis or qualitative review with innovative thinking)

# EXAMPLES OF PUBLISHED PROJECTS

- Determinants of safe behaviour in farmers when working with pesticides
- OH needs of commercial fishermen in south-west England
- Health problems of professional musicians
- Employment and job loss in patients awaiting hip or knee surgery

# WRITING A PAPER (1)

- Identify main messages and required length of paper
- Check journal requirements if have one in mind
- Draft tables and figures
  - Only use where more economical than text
  - Limits for paper journals
  - May be able to supplement online

# WRITING A PAPER (2)

- Draft text for Results section
- Draft Methods section
  - Include only what is relevant to results presented
  - Needs to be clear how results were obtained
  - Some of the detailed aspects of statistical methods sometimes come better in Results section

# WRITING A PAPER (3)

- Draft Introduction
  - Should set up study question(s) by explaining why the topic is important, what is already known, and what still has to be answered
  - May also refer to developments in methodology or new/special circumstances which now make it possible to address the study question(s) more effectively

# WRITING A PAPER (4)

- Draft Discussion
  - Summary of main findings
  - Strengths and limitations of study method
  - Relevant findings from elsewhere and how the new findings fit in (taking into account the strengths and limitations of the study method)
  - Conclusions and recommendations for what is needed next



# WRITING A PAPER (5)

- Add references and draft Abstract in format for chosen journal
  - Often easier to prepare in separate Word documents and then paste in (or use special software for references)
- Add title page, key words, acknowledgements, funding and any other sections required by journal

# WRITING A PAPER (6)

- Check that all co-authors are happy
- Check style and language
  - Efficiency and clarity of communication
  - Elegance
- Submit
  - Usually online

# WRITING A PAPER (7)

- Respond to reviewers' comments if given opportunity
  - Answer each point raised, highlighting any relevant amendments to the paper
  - Rebut with reasons if reviewer is wrong, but be polite
- If rejected, consider reviewers' comments and if appropriate, submit elsewhere with or without amendments.

# ASSESSMENT OF JOURNAL ARTICLES

# HOW JOURNALS OPERATE

- Preliminary checks on submission
- Initial review by Editor or Assistant Editor
- Reject or send to external reviewers
- Reject, accept or request re-submission
- Re-submission with response to reviewers' and Editor's comments
- Editorial decision with or without further external review or further iteration

# REVIEWING FOR JOURNALS (1)

- Assess interest of study question(s), validity of methods, adequacy of discussion, and validity of conclusions
- Be thorough but constructive
- Distinguish between errors/clear problems and matters of personal taste
- Be aware of your own prejudices

# REVIEWING FOR JOURNALS (2)

- Report according to format required by journal
- Distinguish between major problems (study question of no interest or unclear that study usefully addresses question); minor problems (need correction but do not seriously threaten validity or value of conclusions); and points for authors to consider