



Author's Checklist for Preparation of Publications

- Decide which information will be presented**

The most important decision in the preparation of your work for publication is the choice of information to be presented. Obviously, this will determine the strength of the support for your conclusions, but also will affect who should be considered for authorship. This requires the participation of all involved in the research, and should be conducted as a frank and open discussion within the group. During the course of preparation, this will often change. Final decisions are usually made by the lead author.
- Avoid common pitfalls when writing your manuscript**

See below for a list of Things to Avoid When Writing Your Manuscript
- Determine authorship**

Ideally, authorship has been discussed among the authors since the beginning of the project. Authors should be identified based upon the criteria outlined
- Determine which journal the manuscript will be submitted to**

It is important to carefully consider what journal you will submit to. Much time can be wasted by submitting to inappropriate journals. Once decided, you should consult the specific "Instructions to Authors" for that journal, usually available on their website.
- Prepare and review your figures, tables, and illustrations carefully**

Careful preparation of these items is crucial. Make sure that figures and tables are clear, easily readable, accurate, and make the point you wish to make. Type size that is too small to be read, or figures that are too busy, will discourage people from reading your paper at all. Figure and table preparation often takes more time than any other portion of manuscript preparation. Presentation of poor figures or tables implies a lack of care about your work, which reflects poorly on your research as a whole. When using illustrations in your manuscript, take care to address any copyright issues and cite sources appropriately.

- **Check all your references**
Be certain that you have appropriately cited references, to present a valid picture of both the historical development of your project and of the present state of opinion in the field. See Responsible and Efficient Literature Searching for library help.
- **Seek help with writing and/or proofreading**
Seek help in writing and proofreading the manuscript, particularly if English is not your first language. Poor grammar detracts from your message, and again, reflects on your research as a whole. Use a spell checker, and then check the spell checker. Even computers spell things wrong, and will often substitute an inappropriate word for a misspelled word.
- **Have others review your manuscript**
Ask peers and your mentor to review the manuscript. If their contribution is significant, they should be mentioned in the acknowledgements.
- **Let it marinate**
After “finishing” the manuscript, go away from it for a period of time. You will be surprised how much you will find to change after leaving it alone for a while.
- **Ensure that all authors review and approve**
The lead author should ensure that all authors are given an opportunity to review the manuscript and provide their approval for submission and consent of authorship. It is best to obtain all permissions in writing.
- **Take pride in your work!**
The publication is often the only part of your research that others see. Take pride in it. The quality of all you do will be judged by the quality of your manuscript or presentation. Reviewers look poorly upon sloppy manuscripts and poor publication practices.
- **Adhere to generally accepted standards when submitting your manuscript for publication**
Standards can vary substantially by discipline and/or journal. Researchers should consult the appropriate resources within their field to determine conventions and expectations. See below for a list of inappropriate publication practices.

Things to Avoid when Writing your Manuscript

- Incomplete Reporting**

Authors must include enough information to allow other researchers to reproduce their research.

- Improper Use of Statistics**

An inappropriate statistical analysis may lead the reader to conclude there is a meaningful difference, or no difference, when in fact the opposite may be true. Knowingly, recklessly or intentionally misusing or skewing statistics is research misconduct.

- Selective Reporting**

Ignoring evidence that is contrary to your findings is unethical. Authors should never omit or inaccurately represent relevant literature, methodology, data, and/or results from their manuscripts.

- Splitting Data**

Unnecessarily splitting data into multiple publications wastes resources, falsely creates the impression of greater productivity, and minimizes the scientific contribution of the work. It can also cause fellow researchers to neglect your publications, as all the papers seem trivial.

Inappropriate Publication Practices

- Delay of Publication**

Deliberately waiting to publish data with the purpose of preventing other researchers from obtaining a key method, reagent, or concept is unethical as it hinders advancement in the field.

- Duplicative Submissions**

Researchers may not submit a manuscript to more than one journal at a time.

- Serial Publication**

Representing old data as new work when it has been published before is misleading to the reader and wastes the limited resources of publication.

- Unapproved Publication**

Although a technician, student, or postdoc may qualify for authorship, only the PI has the right to determine whether and how data is published. Others may not publish data without the PI's consent.

Source: Washington University in St. Louis