

Writing a Great (Publishable) Paper

Writing and Publishing Series, aka Nature MasterClass
Graduate School Office of Academic and Student Affairs
Cornell University June 25, 2020, 4-5pm Jan Allen (jan.allen@cornell.edu)

What writing project are you thinking about now? (It's perfect in your mind, right? That's OK. Let yourself dream of its magnificence!)

But what's next? **A concrete, step-by-step plan.**

1. Does your advisor have a policy, plan, or expectation for your writing and publishing? (How will you know?)
2. Will you have one or more co-authors? Who are they and what are each of their roles? (How will you know?)
3. What journal will you submit to (submit to first; no simultaneous submissions. Why?) Follow the journal's guidelines for authors.
4. What format will you use for your manuscript?

Ready to write? (Here's our little secret: We have been outlining, drafting and writing all along, right? Why?)

5. Draft a title and abstract. (If you have been told to write the abstract last, then draft a vision statement; it serves as a roadmap. You can revise it later.)
6. Determine and outline the sections of your manuscript. (Will one author write the entire first draft, or will sections be authored by different authors. Who decides?)
7. Determine and develop figures, charts, tables and images. (Why do this first?)

Take a pause from your productive research and writing: Do any of these steps need to be repeated? Why would you do that?

8. Develop an outline and use it as a roadmap. "Fill the reservoir" for your section or paper. (Zigmond & Fischer)

9. Then draft each section. (In what order? And how quickly?) It's OK to write a gosh awful first draft. Zero draft. Raw draft. Pre-writing draft. Pencil and paper draft.
10. Revise and edit.
11. Seek review. Determine usefulness of comments. Revise and edit again.

Take a pause from your productive research and writing: Do any of these steps need to be repeated?

12. Determine that your manuscript is ready to submit. How?
13. Submit to journal editor, following journal guidelines.
14. Respond to reviewers' comments and request for revisions. How and when? (We can discuss why, if needed.) My favorite reviewer comment ever...
15. If you have questions about/are interested in, we can discuss what happens after a manuscript is accepted.

Your questions?

Additional question

For your advisor, what do you need to know about writing a publishable paper? (How will you get this information?)

For your specific field/discipline, what do you need to know about writing a publishable paper? (How will you get this information?)

For a specific journal, what do you need to know about writing a publishable paper? (How will you get this information?)

Why are ethics, integrity, and responsible conduct so important in writing a paper for publication?

What problems have you encountered in writing a paper for submission?

What questions do you still have?

More tips:

- Start writing before you feel ready. Writing and research are parallel processes, not sequential processes. You have my permission to ignore those who tell you that you are not ready to write. Write in secret. But write.
- Use 20% of your available time to write and 80% of your available time to revise and edit. Major revisions (questions, data, structure, transitions) and minor edits (format, wordsmith, punctuations, typos).
- You are ready to publish when you have a story, a finding, a contribution to make to the literature. (No salami slicing!)
- Start thinking and learning about the submission process, the role of each author in manuscript preparation and also after publication and the journal's peer review process.
- Communicate with your advisor. Over-communicate rather than under-communicate. (How do you know?)

