

# **“THE PUBLISHING PROCESS”**

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# Overview

1. Conducting the research: theoretical vs. empirical methodology
2. Writing the paper
3. Submitting the paper
4. DOs and DON'Ts when dealing with the journal and the editors
5. Final considerations

# 1. Conducting the research

- Theoretical methodology?

## PROS

- Sometimes better 'received' in higher impact factor journals as theory is perceived as more 'prestigious'
- If the contribution is 'fundamental' it gets cited more often both in other theoretical contributions and in empirical applications

## CONS

- Many theoretical contributions are just marginal advancements of previous work ('exercises of good math'!)
- Many theoretical models have very little explanatory power of 'reality'. They are based on severely restrictive assumptions (do they always make sense?)

# 1. Conducting the research

- Empirical methodology?

## PROS

- Although it might be more difficult to publish empirical work in the 'number 1' journal, they are normally well received in good quality journals, provided that they have some elements of 'originality'
- There are a lot of journals for 'applied' work

## CONS

- The data used are fundamental:
- Collecting data is time intensive
  - What kind of data? Field data, experimental data, survey data, anecdotal evidence...
- Require good statistical skills and intuition to choose the appropriate method of analysis.

## 2. Writing the paper

- Writing well – a key element
  - Write a good “Introduction” – this motivates and sells the paper.
  - Emphasize the good points – papers are often rejected for weak parts even when some parts are good.
  - Be careful in reporting empirical results – do not overstate or ‘stretch’ them...
  - Write good “Conclusions” – this ties the paper results back to the Introduction and emphasizes its contribution.
  - For strategic reasons, give some thought to whom you cite (and the journals that are cited). This affects editor’s choice of referees and whether your paper fits into the journal.

When you have a 'good', i.e. **advanced**, draft:

a) Send to colleagues for comment.

b) Present at conferences or seminars.

c) Revise based on comments

d) Then submit.

e) *Weak presentations/papers can give you a bad reputation. Do not present/submit half-baked work!*



**Where**

to submit?

# 3. Submitting the paper: Some 'commandments'

1. **Check the interest or special focus** of the journal you are planning to submit to:
  - Cues: recent papers published by the journal (but check to see if editorship has changed).
  - Think “general interest” versus “field” journal

## 2. Have a **submission “tree” (plan).**

- Try for the highest ranked journal you think you have a reasonable chance and have the next journal picked.
  - Journals are ranked due to reputation and impact factor. Impact factors are important for promotions etc., even though they are more important in certain disciplines/departments/countries more than in others
- The “tree” will keep you from being discouraged when the paper is rejected.
- There is an “optimal” rate of rejection. If you are never rejected, you might be shooting too low.



### 3. Differentiated portfolio.

- There is a *tradeoff between 'risk' and 'return'*. Publishing in higher impact journals brings the highest career returns, but the risk is higher too. What if you get rejected (after a long wait) and someone else publishes your idea (or a very similar one)? Remember first published article on a topic acquires a significant advantage
- Have different articles in the 'pipeline', some submitted to higher ranked journals, some to 'good' (i.e. **ISI**) but lower ranked journals (and maybe more specialised in your field) – they also have different waiting times for decisions...

## Some ISI regional science journals

<b>Journal</b>	<b>2010 ISI 1-year Impact Factor</b>	<b>2010 ISI 5-year Impact Factor</b>
Journal of Economic Geography	3.937	4.705
Regional Studies	1.462	2.610
Urban Studies	1.301	2.138
Journal of Urban Economics	1.914	1.941
Papers in Regional Science	1.397	1.767
Journal of Regional Science	1.132	1.544
Growth and Change	1.020	1.467
Annals in Regional Science	0.822	0.987
Spatial Economic Analysis	0.990	N/A
International Regional Science Review	0.939	2.084 (in 2008)
Regional Science and Urban Economics	0.910	1.707

## Types of Editorial Responses

Typically there are 4 categories:

1. “Desk Rejection”- the editor decides the paper is flawed or not appropriate for the journal and does not send it out to reviewers. Desk rejects may not reflect poor quality—just a poor fit.

Also, when a field is expanding (e.g. regional science) and there is higher competition to publish, desk rejections become more and more common!

They are bad, but the ‘good’ thing is that you can quickly move on to other options.

If the paper is sent out to reviewers the possible outcomes are:

2. “Acceptance” – rare in the first round

3. “Invitation to revise-resubmit” – more common than acceptance, but less common than a rejection!

a) **Minor revisions** – no guarantee but high probability of being accepted

b) **Major revisions** – lower probability of being accepted

4. “Rejection” – fairly common

Rejections can be nasty: *“Sir your manuscript is both good and original. Unfortunately that part that is good is not original and that part that is original is not good.”* Samuel Johnson

## Common reasons for rejection

- **Uninteresting topic**—this will kill you with the editor
  - Minor extension of previous work
- **Poor writing** – even if the “substance” of paper is fine, poor writing can hide this.
- Unsuitable/inappropriate topic
- Obvious “**mistakes**” – in the theory, in empirical methodology, in the interpretation, ...
- Excessive length also does not help...

Remember: try to avoid obvious “**red flags**” which will be easily used against you by both referees and editors: e.g., omit obvious citations (especially if then the paper is refereed by someone you omitted!!!), dated reference list, ...

# Next steps...

## If rejected...

Remember: do not get discouraged by rejections, use them to your advantage!

- a) **Read the comments** objectively and dispassionately and optimistically – decide whether to revise or just submit elsewhere as is.
- b) Be ready for some **self-criticism**: is the paper badly flawed? Perhaps you missed some major issue and now it is apparent to you.
- c) **Assess**: When do you bury a paper for good? Here is where it is good to have more than one research project ongoing...

## If a revision is requested... be ready to do some serious work!

- **Evaluate** the strength of the invitation to revise & resubmit. Do you revise or submit elsewhere? Seek advice.
- Follow the comments and do what makes sense to you or what you can do. Sometimes the editor will give you a clear roadmap. **Be SURE to meet the editor's requests.**
- Enclose a **detailed response** to the reviewer (and the editor) outlining what you have done and have not done (and why).
- Know that if you do not do everything, there is an increasing chance the paper will be rejected – an invitation to *revise* is just that.
- Conflicting referee reports – what to do? It is okay to ask the editor for guidance, but do not expect much help. The editor may want to see how the referees react and hence maintain some freedom of action.

## **If accepted...**

1. Rejoice and celebrate!
2. Meet the style guide instructions.
3. Do *not* immediately send another paper to the same editor (journal).
4. Get on with your work. Publishing reminds people that you can and so more will be expected.



## 4. DOs and DON'Ts when dealing with the journal and the editors...

### **DO NOT:**

- Send a letter to the editor complaining the referees or the co-editor are incompetent (or worse!).
- Send a lot of papers to an editor who seems to like your work – even your friends will not be able to find room and they may get tired of seeing your name.
- Try to publish essentially the same material more than once. It will hurt your reputation.

## DO:

- It is OK to send a query if your paper has been there a while without a response (say, 6 months).
  - But make sure that you are not delinquent in your own reviewing, especially for this journal.
- If an editor asks you to review a paper and it is in your field, say **“yes”**.
  - Review promptly and carefully – you will learn what makes good and bad papers.
  - Be constructive in your report.
  - Do not put a recommendation in the report – save this for the cover letter to the editor.

## 5. Final things to consider

- Sole-authored versus co-authored papers?
- Tradeoffs when authoring with advisors/supervisors and senior people.
- Many “small” papers versus fewer “big” papers?
- Independent contributions versus comments?
- Top journals versus lower-ranked journals?
- General interest versus field journals?
- Theory versus empirical versus experimental versus...?

# Some references

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