

From the Editors: Dos and Don'ts

The old saying that “you only have one chance to make a first impression” is one that applies to submitting papers to a journal. We have seen so many papers flounder on this first step that we want to share our list of dos and don'ts.

Dos

1. Before you consider submitting to any journal, look at copies to familiarize yourself with the sorts of topics covered. Every journal has its own targeted readership, and deciding on the most appropriate fit for your paper will save you and the editors time.
2. Read the guidelines and follow them. A great deal of time and thought have gone into developing the guidelines so that papers will have a uniformity of structure compatible with the journal's publishing policies. Recommended length and proper reference form are two common errors. To ignore them is to give the impression that you do not take your submission seriously. Once an author pointed out to us that an instruction in our guidelines was confusing and misleading. That attention to detail was impressive and we gratefully addressed our oversight.
3. Make sure that your paper demonstrates that you are aware of the main literature that pertains to your topic.
4. Check that your paper is in standard academic English. If you are not a native English speaker, have your paper edited by someone who is. If you are a native English speaker, you would still be well advised to have your paper read by someone with special writing skills.
5. Spell-check!
6. If your paper is declined for publication but you feel you have received a fair and useful review, let the editors know, so they can pass it on to the reviewers. They have done their best.

Don'ts

1. Do not send an idea for a paper or a draft saying that if the editor thinks it is interesting, you will develop it.
2. Do not submit a paper saying that you know it is not in the journal's format but if it is accepted, you will change it.
3. In response to a review recommending changes, do not write back to say you are too busy and is there not someone in the editorial office who will rewrite it for you.
4. Do not follow your submission by continuing to send in different versions of your paper (unless requested to do so in response to a review) because you

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- are “developing your thoughts.” By the time you ask editors and reviewers to consider your paper it should be in the form you believe to be finished.
5. And do not doubt that editors and reviewers are really on your side. The editor–author relationship is not an adversarial one. We receive each submission with the hope that it will be accepted for publication, if not by us, then by another journal, and we offer suggestions to try to make that happen.

We know that authors have their own lists of dos and don'ts, and we would like to hear them so we can learn from your experiences. What do you look for in submitting your work to a journal? What do you find helpful and what do you wish were different? Send us your own submission stories—the good and the bad—but no journal names, please. We want to hear your side.