

Writing & Submitting a Paper for a Peer Reviewed Life Sciences Journal

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The Original Study

The ***raison d'être*** for Peer
Reviewed Journals

(A major determinant of the Impact Factor)

Other Types of Papers

- Editorials, News and Commentary
- **Reviews & Scholarly Dialog** (Determines Impact Factor)
- **Case Reports** (Some journals do not have as they can have a negative effect on the impact factor)
 - Case Studies (*Thyroid* has)
 - Patients with Remarkable Features or Rare Disorders (*Thyroid* has)
- Letters to the Editor
- Notices & Testimonials

Guidelines & Consensus Statements

(Current Thyroid Policy)

- Authors – An Organization
 - Publish in Editorials, News, and Commentary or Notices Section
 - No abstract
- Authors – Individuals
 - Publish in Original Studies, Reviews and Scholarly Dialog
 - Has Abstract
 - Authors may be selected & funded by organization but content cannot be dictated by organization
 - Has elements of Original Study, Review, and Scholarly Dialog

Manuscript Central

(One of the major sites used by journals to facilitate manuscript submission and review)

- Manuscript Central takes the files that are submitted and compiles from the files. Do not submit a PDF of your manuscript. Submit the following files.
 - Text File
 - Word or other Widely used text file (O.K. to use older versions of Word such as 2003)
 - Image Files
 - Should be high quality. Avoid JPEG

The Text File

- Keep the formatting of the text file very simple. Avoid the following.
 - Multiple fonts in either type or size
 - Justification
 - Single space
 - Newspaper column format
 - Use of paragraph indents. Instead tab in 5 spaces for new paragraphs.
 - Unusual margins
 - Submitting tables as separate files. Instead put them at the end of text file with a page break before and after each table. If table is very wide separate by section breaks and use landscape view.
- To have special effects in paper formatting can be changed after it is accepted.

The Title

- Not too long, not too short
- Should contain as much specific information as possible
 - For Letters - the only part of paper seen in Pub Med. Therefore the title should tell the story of what is in the paper.
- Avoid abbreviations

The Authors and Their Affiliation

- Show complete information for **ALL** authors.
- Complete first name, last name, and middle initial if the author's uses these elements for name
 - Some authors only submit the initial for the first name and no middle initial and the information is published in this format. This makes literature search difficult.
- Institutional affiliation (include country)
- Address
- Phone Numbers
- E Mail address
- Indicate which author is the corresponding author

The Abstract, 1

- Many readers only read the abstract, and do so while on the internet.
- Therefore the abstract must be clear, well, organized
-
- The abstract should summarize the most important **DATA** . Do not waste valuable space with sentences that do not say anything different from what the reader can infer from the title.

The Abstract, 2

- ***Thyroid*** uses the following format
 - Background
 - Start with one or two sentences regarding the background followed by a statement of the hypothesis that was tested.
 - Methods
 - Results
 - Conclusions
 - Without being too speculative try to say something about the significance of the results

The Introduction

- Should be short
 - Briefly give background
 - Save detailed review of prior studies for the discussion
- State the goal of the study in specific terms
- Better yet state the hypothesis to be tested!

The “Methods”, 1

- A few journals provide method information in footnotes and legends to figures.
 - With some exceptions it is usually best to give all methods in the methods section.
- Try to use abbreviations and group names that are descriptive.
 - I prefer, for example, MH group for Maternal Hypothyroid Group rather than Group 1.
- Include good section on statistics and criteria for testing the hypothesis

The “Methods”, 2

- Carefully define the inclusion and exclusion criteria for groups and diagnoses.
- Use the same terminology throughout the paper that was used to define the criteria for groups, diagnoses, etc.
- Give information on study oversight and informed consent

The “Results” - Text

- State results specifically. Then refer to Table or Figures to document the statement.
- Try to limit interpreting the results in the RESULTS section. Use the DISCUSSION section to interpret the results. A few journals combine results, discussion and even methods.

The Results – Tables vs. Figures

- Tables can show exact results (i.e. numbers) and therefore allow a more critical review of the paper.
- Figures are more memorable and useful when presenting the results of a study to an audience. This might make them more likely to be shown by speakers.
- Follow journal instructions for Figures and Illustrations.
 - Poor quality delays publication.
 - Poor quality mars online version of paper.

The Results – Figure and Illustration Legends

- State what the Figure or Illustration shows in the first sentence.
- Try not to make the legend too long.

The “Discussion”

- Briefly summarize the results.
- Provide an interpretation of the results.
- Indicate how the results support/refute the hypothesis
- Indicate how the results add to/support/do not support concepts promulgated / reported in the literature.
- SPECIFICALLY STATE WHAT THE NOVEL RESULTS OF THE STUDY ARE.
- Discuss limitations of the study
- Provide a conclusion

The “References”

- Check them carefully for accuracy and journal format
 - Are there references that are not cited in the text?
 - Did the reference order or numbers become corrupted in the revised version?
- Try to cite the primary reference, not a reference that cites the reference.
 - In some cases the reviews do not actually contain the information attributed to them.
- Check out the older literature.
 - The literature contains a lot of “rediscoveries”

The Acknowledgements and Disclosures

- Acknowledge grant support, help provided by colleagues.
- Disclose ties industry, potential conflicts of interest.
- During the submission process Thyroid asks if the study was NIH supported.

Grammar and Organization

- Avoid redundancy (Can the same thing be said with less words)
 - Within sentences
 - Within sections
 - Between two sections
 - Introduction and Discussion
 - Results and Discussion
- **BUT BE SPECIFIC !**
- Avoid duplicate terminology as this confuses the reader who thinks two different things are being talked about.
 - Autoimmune thyroid disease / thyroid autoimmunity

Grammar and Organization

- Avoid circular logic
 - Introduction
 - Discussion
- Spell check but watch out for inappropriate auto corrections that change the intended word.
- Watch out for words with the same pronunciation but different meanings
 - Discrete vs. discreet

Before You Submit

- Get an expert to review your paper before submitting.
- Get a non expert to review your paper before submitting.
 - If a non expert cannot follow the paper it is more likely to be delayed in the review process and more likely to be rejected.

When you Submit

- Its OK to suggest reviewers.
- Include a complete but brief cover letter. If this is on a topic you have published on before you can say something briefly about what new insights the paper provides.
- Don't count, however, on the reviewer (or even the Editor) reading your cover letter carefully (at least during the first stages of the review) so make sure the paper stands on its own.
- Mention unusual aspects of the submission.

When you get your paper back

- When get your review back take a deep breath and hold on to your ego.
- Don't delay revising paper and responding to comments but take a brief "time out" then come and check your revision and comments.
- If you submit a revision Thank the persons who reviewed the first version!! (They don't get paid and are usually doing you a favor)
- Submit to another journal or move on if your paper receives a clear rejection.

Good Luck!

What is that information at the top left hand corner of the first page of a paper?

- First Line – Title of Journal
- Second Line – Volume, Number and Year
- Third Line – Publisher
- Fourth Line - Digital Object Identifier (Digital Online Identifier)

Digital Object Identifier, Digital Online Identifier (DOI)

- DOIs are Unique
 - Enter DOI in Pub Med and only one Reference comes back
 - Example of DOI
 - **DOI: 10,1089/thy.2007.0158**
 - 10,1089 identifies the Publisher
 - Next is the journal abbreviation
 - Next is the year the paper was submitted
 - Next is the submission number for that year

The PMID

- Appears in Medline Searches
- “Library” Assignment
- Unique – Enter term alone and only one reference comes up
- PMIDs are assigned to most all material in peer reviewed journals