

A Guide to Publishing Research

Find out how to choose the right format of publication and select a publisher, including methods of peer review and open access policies.

Why publish your research findings?

- To share knowledge with others in your field and beyond
- To build your own or your institution's reputation
- To fulfil contractual requirements from funders or employers.

Whatever the reason, this may also influence where you choose to publish.

Publisher and publication format

The main methods of publishing peer reviewed research are:

- Journal articles
- Book chapters in edited volumes
- Monographs
- Conference proceedings papers.

Some publications are geared towards a professional, practitioner or academic audience, and others a national or more international audience. Some have a tight focus on one topic, and others a broader disciplinary focus. Many journals offer a range of article types, including full or short length articles, commentaries, and reviews, which perform different functions.

1. Consider how you are most likely to reach your target audience

Start with the journals or monograph publishers you or your colleagues know and read, and those your peers publish with. Look at the aims and scopes of a publisher, and recent books or issues of journals to see if they are actively publishing in your area of research. Calls for submissions (e.g. on professional mailing lists) may also guide you.

2. Decide how succinctly you can write up your research

This will affect whether you choose to submit a full length research article or a shorter commentary piece to a journal. If you had a book in mind you should also think about your potential word count as many publishers impose minimum and maximum lengths. While journal articles tend to be written and then submitted to a journal, you should seek contact with a publisher before writing a book, as they may wish to review a book proposal before issuing a contract.

Sharing research

When choosing a publisher for your book, you should

identify their primary market and the likely price point of the publication (an editor will be able to advise). Many publishers issue short print runs at high price points geared towards libraries rather than individuals. They can focus on the UK, North America, or may be more international. Some still support distribution in print over digital. All these factors impact your audience size, though in some subjects it might be beneficial to target a smaller, specific audience.

Before submitting your research, check the publisher's open access options. Open access means making your work freely available online. Many publishers charge for this, but most allow manuscripts to be uploaded to an open access repository, allowing you to further share your research. Checking and negotiating publishing agreements can also make sure you retain certain rights, like posting to a repository or using in future publications or translations. Research funders and employers may have requirements about open access; check these before signing a contract. Many research funders have signed up to '[Plan S](#)', which from 2021 requires all research articles to

be made available open access from the date of publication. The [ChronosHub](#) journal checker tool can help you find an appropriate journal if you have research funding.

Peer review

When publishing research, you should make sure some form of peer review is undertaken. This is an important trust indicator for other researchers, professionals, policy makers and reporters looking into a certain field of research. After initial screening by an editor, peer reviewers are chosen as experts in the area, who make sure research is valid, original, significant, relevant and well written. After peer review, most researchers should expect some revisions to be requested by an editor.

Peer review usually occurs before publication, but this varies across book and journal publishers. Some of the main criticisms of peer review are around issues of trust and bias in the peer review system, which newer systems of peer review aim to address.

- Single-blind peer review. Author name revealed to reviewers, but reviewers are anonymous to author

- Double-blind peer review. Both author and reviewers are anonymous to each other
- Open peer review. Reviewers and authors are known to each other. Open peer review may also mean reviews are published alongside the research, increasing transparency of review process
- Post-publication peer review. After initial screening, research is published without peer review. Reviews are submitted and posted alongside the publication. Authors may be invited to submit a revised version. This method is often seen in newer open access journals
- Other related forms of post-publication peer review include published book reviews (more common in the humanities and social sciences) and letters to a journal editor (more common in the sciences).

Preprints

Preprint servers are becoming increasingly common across all disciplines. It's possible to upload an early version of your manuscript (usually one which will become an article) to a preprint server (similar to a repository), where it becomes public after a light screening process. There are preprint

servers for most subjects. [Wikipedia](#) maintains a useful summary of the major preprint servers for different subject areas.

Preprints offer several advantages for researcher:

- They allow findings to be more rapidly communicated, while the traditional peer review and publication process may take months
- They can prompt feedback and review to help improve your manuscript before formal submission to a journal
- Preprints are usually assigned a DOI (a permanent identifier) like a journal article, which encourages others to cite preprints as a publication. They have been shown to increase citations where a preprint is later published as an article.

Many journals encourage the use of preprint servers prior to formal submission, and some preprint servers allow quick submission to particular journals. However, a small number of journals will not consider manuscripts that have been posted to preprint servers. [Sherpa Romeo](#) indicates which journals may not allow the use of preprint servers. Additionally, as preprints are not

peer reviewed at the point of upload, you should consider the implications of this when citing or reusing them.

It is not generally encouraged to post book manuscripts online prior to submission to a publisher, as this is far more likely to prevent publication than in the case of journal articles and may later breach any contract you have signed with the book publisher.

Impact Factor: A journal's impact factor is a calculation of how many times an average article published in that journal has been cited in the past two years. Although impact factor and journal 'prestige' are still used by many researchers to select journals, the concept is discredited by many research organisations and funders. Impact factors are biased in many ways, including in ways related to geography, language and discipline. It is best to avoid using impact factors in decisions about where to publish.

Publisher quality

There are thousands of journals to choose from, but it's good practice to check their quality. Look out for a lack of transparency in peer review or no peer review at all, high

submission fees for authors or a promise of quick publication times. [Think.Check.Submit](#) can help you assess a publisher's credibility before submission.

Some things to check are:

- If the journal editors and editorial board members are known experts
- If you can easily contact the editors or publisher
- If you or your colleagues know of the publisher or recognise recently published authors
- If they have clear peer review processes, and are a member of professional ethics body like [COPE](#) or a scholarly publishing association
- If the publisher states some form of preservation policy for their publications
- If publications are indexed in the expected databases for your subject
- If the publisher is clear about any charges issued to authors (such as submission and open access fees) and services they provide such as copyediting
- If it's clear which rights are signed over to the publisher and which you retain as an author
- If the publisher provides information about how they market and promote your publication.

Further resources

[Academic-Led Publishers:](#)

The Radical Open Access group maintains a list of book publishers led by academics, many of which are open access publishers.

[‘How to get published in academic journals’ \(Manchester University\)](#): a useful guide including tips for writing journal articles.

[OpenDOAR](#): a quality assured directory of open access repositories, searchable by subject.

The British Library Guide to Sharing Your Research Online contains tips for disseminating your research after publication, and information on alternatives to formal publication.

[Peer Review: The Nuts and Bolt \(Sense about Science\)](#): a comprehensive introduction to the different kinds of peer review.

The British Library

Scholarly Communications Toolkit
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