

What Does it Take to Publish in the AJAE?

1. Get a Good Idea

- **Some manuscripts fail immediately because they are based on uninteresting or irrelevant ideas, or because somebody already had this idea 20 years ago.**
- **Read the literature, go to conferences, talk to people, keep your eyes and ears open.**
- **It is about as much work to do an uninteresting paper as an interesting one so you might as well do something that you and other find interesting, and that really makes a contribution to *new* knowledge.**

2. Turn the Idea into a Well-Posed, Answerable Question.

- **Is your contribution going to be new theory, new methods, a new application, or some combination?**
- **AJAE publishes pure theory articles (but not that many), pure methodology articles (very few), and pure application papers (quite a few). But the majority have a (slight) extension of theory (or occasionally methods) along with an application or test.**
- **What is your contribution going to be? If you can't tell me no editor is going to publish your paper.**
- **Go to the literature (place your contribution in context).**
- **Make sure your question is answerable.**

3. Do the Research Right

- Ask yourself what's the best way to answer the question or address the problem, not the easiest way.
- Editors and reviewers know when you are taking the easy way out, and you won't like their response.
- One of the most obvious failures occurs when an author starts out with a data set they have or a technique they want to apply.
- Don't start with data and don't start with a technique. Start with the problem and design the data collection and techniques used around the problem.

4. Write Effectively

- The introduction and the conclusion are critical—if they don't do their jobs all else fails!
- The analysis and results sections must be carefully written as well so they communicate effectively what was done.
- Make the length commensurate with the size of the contribution. Editors like short and to the point not long and rambling.
- Provide the “right” amount of detail.
- Use equations only when necessary.
- Instill confidence in reviewers and editors.
- Get feedback from colleagues (do not send in your first draft).

- **Let the manuscript sit for a week and come back for a final review and edit before you send it off.**

5. Understand the Review Process

- **The review process is a grind.**
- **It may take several months, multiple revisions, and, quite often, a complete re-do of the analysis before a manuscript is accepted.**
- **Four types of initial response letters:**
 - a) **Accept as is.**
 - b) **Reject but invite you to revise and resubmit.**
 - c) **Reject and I might look at it again if you completely redo everything and re-write the manuscript. Even then I will probably reject the revision.**
 - d) **Reject and I don't ever want to see this again.**
- **If you get to revise and resubmit:**
 - a) **Revise the manuscript constructively.**
 - b) **Write a cover letter to the editor that explains your response.**

- c) **Write responses to each reviewer that explains how you have dealt with their comments (on separate sheets).**

- **In doing this:**

- a) **Respond positively to criticism.**
- b) **Keep an open mind.**
- c) **Don't dismiss reviewers.**
- d) **If you think reviewers are wrong appeal to the editor.**
- e) **Remember that different journals and different parts of the profession have different value systems.**

Some Dos and Don'ts

Do

- 1. Make sure the subject matter of the manuscript matches the focus of the journal—don't send a paper on returns to scale in manufacturing to the AJAE.**
- 2. Follow journal submission guidelines.**
- 3. Communicate your innovative contribution to new knowledge in your introduction, and understand whether your contribution is to new theory, methods, application, or some combination. If I don't know this after reading the introduction it is all over.**
- 4. Be positive in your evaluation of the existing literature (remember who your reviewers are going to be).**
- 5. Explain details of what was done carefully. If I don't understand what you did it is easy to find reasons to reject.**
- 6. Make sure notation is understandable, concise, and consistent.**
- 7. Pay attention to detail (spelling, grammar, style, formatting, references etc.).**
- 8. Keep equations to a minimum.**
- 9. Focus on one idea per manuscript.**
- 10. Keep manuscript as short and focused as possible.**

11. Remember that reading a manuscript for review has to be a pleasurable experience for a reviewer or you are going to have anything but a pleasurable time reading the reviews.

12. Respond positively and constructively if you get a chance to revise and re-submit. Coming back and arguing you are right and the reviewer is wrong is (usually) not going to do it.

13. Learn to become a good reviewer. It will help you understand where reviewers are coming from and help you become a better author. Also, good reviewers are very valuable to editors and become well known to them.

Don't

1. Spend any time on a cover letter to go with your submission. Editors don't have time to read them (and are not swayed by them anyway).

2. Spend time trying to influence who your reviewers will be. This can backfire.

3. Fight with reviewers.

4. Cite too much of your own work.

5. Submit too many papers to the same journal (i.e. do diversify).

6. Write nasty E-mails to the editor asking why they are incompetent or why the heck it is taking so long to evaluate your paper. A polite request for an update of status is fine, but being aggressive and confrontational with the editor cannot help your cause.

- 7. Get discouraged by rejection. Some of the best papers and authors get rejected at some point.**
- 8. Send in either initial or revised manuscripts that have no page numbers or pages missing, or no author contact information etc.**
- 9. Decline reasonable review requests from editors of journals you are interested in publishing in. Becoming a better reviewer makes you a better author.**
- 10. Get defensive. Always look for what has gone wrong and how to do it better. Rejections are almost always your fault, even when reviewers are wrong.**
- 11. Write a paper on a topic and not place it within the context of the literature. Reviewers hate this and who do you think the reviewers might be anyway?**