

HOW TO GET YOUR ARTICLE PUBLISHED

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INTRODUCTION

- Dissemination of findings, has not been well described in the literature.
- Knowledge to successfully conduct research, writing is a skill or craft that can be learned over time.
- **The purpose of this talk is to share our personal strategies to increase your publication rates.**



WRITE WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES YOU: WRITE WHEN YOU ARE IN THE FLOW

- All of us have had that moment when we sat down to write and we stare at the screen and nothing comes out.
- When this happens, do another activity (like take a walk) and just let the ideas bubble around in your head.
- Then come back and just slam the ideas on to the paper. As you do this, you will begin to get “in the flow.”
- Once you are in the flow, avoid at all costs the “interruption of your flow” that occurs when other “priorities” are forcing you to do to do other things.
- Whatever it takes, get those ideas on paper.
- This may even be at a conference when your ideas are bubbling up at the top of your head and the spirit is moving you to write.



WRITING THE SECTIONS OF THE PAPER

See Appendix A



WRITING THE SECTIONS: LITERATURE REVIEW

- Unless it is a systematic review, the literature review should be short.
- Introduce the topic.
- Do not quote study after study.
- Summarize the state of the science.
- Make the case for the paper.
- End this section with the purpose, objective or aims of the paper.

WRITING THE SECTIONS:



- Clearly delineate the design, sample procedures, measures, and analysis section.
- Clearly state the design (e.g., cross-sectional, randomized controlled trial, etc.).
- Clearly state the setting sample, and procedures.
- If the measures are common, no need to give psychometrics, just reference.

WRITING THE SECTIONS:



- The results section should go from the least complex analyses to the most complex analyses (e.g., univariates, to bivariates, to multivariates).
- Try not to duplicate the tables in the text.
- Tables should be clearly labeled and stand on their own.
- Keep tables to a minimum (about 3).

WRITING THE SECTIONS: DISCUSSION

- Discussion is hardest to write: it requires application.
- While the results are written from least complex to most complex, the discussion is often (but not always) written in the opposite starting with a discussion of the most complex finding working backwards to the least complex.
- Each finding should be stated and then followed by a reapplication to the literature or practice.

SAMPLE: DISCUSSION

Start with “The most interesting finding is that the multivariate analysis found that This agrees with some studies... However it conflicts with other studies....” The next paragraph could say, “while xx was significantly differently in the bivariate analyses, it was no longer significant in the multivariate analyses. This might be because xxx.” The third paragraph may talk a bit about the description of the sample. Make sure you relate the discussion back to your aims.

WRITING THE

Limitations of Study

- Of course it was your study and you think it is great, but every study has its limitations.
- Organize the limitations paragraph in the same order of the methods section and write a sentence for each section.
- Can also include strengths.
- Example: This was a cross-sectional *design* and therefore could not control for changes over time. The sample was large, but was a convenience sample of and therefore may not be generalizable... Quit rates were by self-report, but there was no cotinine validation (procedures). Analyses were unable to control for socioeconomic status...

WRITE A PROTOCOL PAPER

- If you have a funded grant, many journals will publish the protocol of the grant.
- Moreover, since the grant was already peer reviewed, the journals that publish protocol papers often do not send them out for review.
- Hence time to publication is very quick.
- These are mostly in online journals.



LINE UP YOUR PAPERS: GET ORGANIZED



it's time
to
get
organized.

- Researchers are pulled in many directions. Thus, more often than not having papers started, they have multiple papers half finished.
- Put the pieces of the unfinished papers in a folder and stack the folders on your desk and start working down the pile.
- Set a goal: e.g., submit one a month.
- If you are accepted to do a presentation, draft the article for the presentation. Based on feedback received at the presentation, revise and submit.

ESTABLISH A WRITING COMMUNITY

- Writing is a lonely job.
- However, just as exercise works better in groups, so does writing work better in groups, perhaps because social support increases productivity or misery loves company.
- Writing groups encourage accountability.
- My physician colleagues had four papers and I had two papers that year. Turns out they all wrote paper and put each other on. I wrote two and was still behind.



STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISH A WRITING COMMUNITY

- Get your numbers up; negotiate with your collaborators to put each other on.
- Go for a mix of your own papers and authorship on others papers.
- Negotiate before the writing of the paper starts and contribute based on your place in the authorship line up.
- Jockey for first, second author, or last (senior and corresponding); do not bother arguing between fourth or fifth, because nobody cares.
- Be generous with authorship; if you leave someone off that feels they should be on, the working relationship is probably over.

MANAGING CO-AUTHORS AND COLLABORATORS

Sample Scenarios

- You send a draft of a paper to a collaborator for input and 30 seconds later they email back and say "nice job, thanks for including me".
- You mail a draft of the paper to your boss and it has been sitting on his desk for 2 months.
- You agree to let a student take the lead on a paper, but once you get started, you realize the student is out of their league and you end up doing so much editing that you practically wrote the paper.
- The surgeons in the department demand that they be authors on any paper that includes their patients.



STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CO-AUTHORS AND COLLABORATORS (CONT)

- Authorship guidelines are interpreted differently by different people and disciplines.
- As a junior author, you may have to prove yourself once and take a lesser position to get in the door, but after that negotiate hard.
- As a junior author, work with more than one team if possible and figure out which team is interested in your career versus just getting you to do the work.
- As a senior author, do not promise first author to a junior person on the first round. If you find that they really rise to the occasion, then you can give it to them at the end.
- In the end, the person who owns the data has the final say.
- Treat co-authors like stocks: keep your winners and sell your losers.

MENTORING STUDENTS

- Most students are clueless as to the amount of work involved doing the research let alone getting through Institutional Review Boards.
- The faculty has many students with different projects, none are graduating on time, and the faculties own research suffers. This is not helpful to the faculty or students.
- For a Masters student, have them write a section of the paper for their thesis and include them as an author.
- For a PhD student, let them write 3 papers using your data.
- For a post-doctoral student, allow them to develop an idea that is an off shoot of your work (e.g., based on a faculty smoking cessation website, a doctoral student develops a website for smokeless tobacco).



STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STUDENTS

- Rather than students involving you in **their** work, invite students to work on **your** work.
- No matter what position others take on your paper, never let them be corresponding author if it is your data.
- If it is your data, tell students and junior faculty that if you do not publish the paper within a given time frame, you have the right to take it back, publish it, and move yourself forward as first author.



CHOOSING A JOURNAL

SEE APPENDIX B

- You want to get in the highest impact journal, yet not shoot too high.
- Nowadays, there are many online journals that publish for a fee. If you choose to avoid these, remember that everyone else is doing this too, so the competition is steeper.
- However, many of these online journals publish quickly are very good.



CHOOSING A JOURNAL (CONT)

- *If you present at a conference, ask if there are any editors in the audience that would like to publish this paper.*
- *Look at the reference list of your article and see if there are journals that fit with your topic.*
- *Plop your abstract into the Journal Estimator Name Estimator (Jane) <http://www.biosemantics.org/jane/>. This website will give you a list of journals with their impact factors that might want to publish this article.*
- *Make a table of the potential journals for you manuscript in order of impact factor (see Appendix B for sample journal list).*
- *Once you have a list of potential journal, surf tables of contents to see if they have published similar things.*

NAMING REVIEWERS

- Since you generally cannot name someone that you have published with, you are often shooting in the dark. What you want is a **fair** review.
- *Look at your reference list to find potential reviewers.*
- *Consider both content and methods experts.*
- *Ask your colleagues about them.*
- *Keep a list of reviewers and notes on when you named them and the types of reviews you get.*
- Once I named the same reviewer several times and each time I named that person I received a bad/unfair review. Once I quit naming that reviewer, I quit getting bad/unfair reviews. Do I know for sure who it was? No. Will I name them again? NO!

RESPONDING TO REVIEWERS

SEE APPENDIX C FOR SAMPLE RESPONSE TO REVIEWER

- Many people who get a bad review are so upset that they never resubmit the paper. Remember, this is just one person's opinion. There is a home for every paper, so do not give up.
- Read the review once and put it away for a few days, while you dust yourself off.
- Read it a few days later and learn from it.



RESPONDING TO REVIEWERS (CONT)

- It is important to respond positively to reviewers.
- The reviewer is always correct.
- Never say “we respectfully disagree”.
- If you are rejected, address the reviewers comments anyway in the paper as the same reviewer may get it again.
- Ask your colleagues to critique it before you send it out.

CONDUCTING A REVIEW



The same guideline that was used to write a paper can be used to guide the writing of the review. See Appendix A.

Give both positive and constructive feedback.

Request a statistical review if needed.

Leave the English-as-a-second-language editing to the editor.

My first reviews took me about 8 hours, but now it takes about 2 hours.

CONDUCTING A REVIEW (CONT)

You become known in your field in part by how well you write reviews.

Some journals rate you as to how well you review.

If you are rated high, you get more reviews.

Do not accept reviews that you are not qualified to do.

While reviews are anonymous, remember that the author may have named you and thus may have inkling that you are the reviewer.

ESTABLISH AND TRACK YOUR PAPER BANK SEE APPENDIX D FOR SAMPLE PAPER BANK



- Your papers under review are like money in the bank. If your bank account is low, you need to replenish.
- Set a goal: e.g., keep 4 under review at all times.
- Allow “time to press”—about 2-3 years from first submission.

CONCLUSION

- Those first papers are tough and take a long time to write.
- My first one took a month full-time. Now I can do most in about a week. It does get quicker.
- Hang in there, have fun, and enjoy yourself.

