How to Get
Your Paper Rejected

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Citations and sources


10 reasons why manuscripts are not accepted for publication

Some are easily avoided or fixed.
Others are fatal flaws.
#10 You chose the wrong journal.

Wrong journal
- Journals receive articles outside their scope of interest.
- A cause for rejection easily avoided.
- The fix: Read the journal to which you're submitting a manuscript.

#9 You did not read the instructions to authors.
Ignored instructions to authors

- Journals often have their own specific instructions: read and follow.
- ICMJE (www.icmje.org) and WAME: style and requirements among journals.
- Specific instructions should be followed. E.g. format for electronic submission of figures.

#8 Your paper has a major, undisclosed conflict of interest.

Non disclosure

- Makes the editor suspicious about the validity of your results.
- Raises questions about your integrity and the worth of your research.
- The fix: Be candid and forthright with the editor.
#7 Poor writing style

### Obscure, flowery, or complicated language

In promulgating your esoteric cogitations, or articulating your superficial sentimentalities and amicable philosophical or psychological observations, beware of platitudeous ponderosities. Let your communications possess a clarified conciseness, a co-efficient consistency and a concatenated cogency. Eschew conglomerations of flatulated garrulity, jejune babblement, and asinine affectations. Let your extemporaneous descantings and unpremeditated expiations have intelligibility and veracious vivacity….

### Avoid:

- Folk culture of patient care: acronyms, euphemisms, and jargon,
- Clinical slang, cliches, purely local terminology,
- Unnecessary abbreviations and acronyms.
Answer 4 questions, concisely:

- Why did you start? (introduction, including background & hypothesis)
- What did you do? (methods section)
- What did you find? (results section)
- What does it mean? (discussion section)

#6 Too many mechanical errors: spelling, grammar, punctuation, & “typos”

Sloppy writing

Raises suspicion that the entire study was carelessly done, not worth publishing.
**Mechanical errors: the fix**

- Your KUMC Writing Consult Center: editors will check manuscripts for errors & return a “clean” text (mmontell@kumc.edu).
- Professional services found online.
- Commercial software programs designed to improve spelling and grammar (www.studygs.net/spelling.htm).

**#5 No substantive changes**

The paper has been rejected by the editor of one journal & is now submitted to another journal without substantive changes.

**No substantive changes: dangerous**

- Reviewers and editors live in a small world. Can be insulted.
- If submitting elsewhere after rejection, be candid.
- Make substantive changes and say so.
#4 Authors plagiarize others or themselves, misquote or omit pertinent information.

Dishonesty
- Plagiarizing others.
- Plagiarizing yourself.
- Misquoting, or omitting pertinent references.
- Blatant dishonesty (e.g., use of fictitious data) is dealt with harshly.

#3 No hypothesis
Readers need to know up front what idea you are testing and why

Must be clearly stated in the Introduction

#2 Lack of focus

Rambling, unfocused text, difficult to read.

Particularly damaging:
- Inadequate description of the Methods
- Scattered reporting of the Results
- Lack of focus in the Discussion section
- Poor study design
**Inadequate Methods section**

- Often too short: failure to include enough detail on what was done.
- Include photographs, detailed diagrams, or survey instruments.

**Reporting of results**

- Logical, consistent order, with actual data rather than percentages, summary statements, or generalizations.
- No interpretive comments

**Unfocused discussion**

- Unsupported or erroneous conclusions.
- Conclusions disproportionate to the results.
- Uncritically accepting statistical results.
Poor study design: fatal flaw

- Know the existing literature.
- Seek advice from experienced researchers.
- Consult a statistician or epidemiologist: sample size, units of analysis, determinants of clinical importance or statistical significance.

#1 Failure to revise and resubmit after peer review

Peer review process plays vital role in yielding an accurate, clear, and convincing message.

Using peer review

- Include a detailed letter to editor, listing points raised by reviewers and how (or whether) each point has been addressed in the revision.
- Include both a final version of the paper and a highlighted version showing where the changes have been made.
- Thank the reviewers for their insights and suggestions.
Ground Zero

Failure to write and submit a manuscript at all.

“Too many potentially useful contributions to…science…have never been published simply because the investigator stopped after the abstract was completed.”