



# Deciding Where to Publish: Journal Identification Tips

*This resource document presents tips to assist DP18-1815, DP18-1816, and DP18-1817 recipients with identifying journals to publish written products.*

## **Step 1: Gather information on potential target journals.\*\***

Your investigation of the target journal provides information that shapes your manuscript, including article length, sections to include, the level of detail expected, key terms and definitions, and formatting guidelines. Then use these considerations to scope and schedule your writing and editing tasks. (If you are writing with coauthors, see Appendix D of *The Writing System* textbook for suggestions on scoping and scheduling collaborative writing projects.)

- ✓ *For more information, consider contacting colleagues who have published with the target journal.*  
Do they recommend that you plan your manuscript for submission to that journal? Do they have any tips for making your manuscript look like a good fit? How was their experience working with the journal's editor, reviewers, and proofreaders?
- ✓ *You may also email the journal editor with questions.*  
Be sure to keep your email brief—under 100 words, with yes-or-no questions—and professional. In some instances, it may be beneficial to prepare a cover letter addressed to the editor that provides justification about why you think the journal is an appropriate fit and includes a synopsis of your major findings.

## **Step 2: Identify your target journal before you start writing. Your main concern in identifying a target journal is**

**“fit.”\*\*** A journal is a good fit if the journal's readership aligns with your audience. You can answer some of these questions with a careful search of the journal's website and submission instructions. You can write your manuscript more efficiently if you know your target journal before you start writing. To determine if a journal is a good fit, answer these questions:

- ✓ *Who needs to read about your work?* Consider if your product is for colleagues in your field of work, the general public, or both.
- ✓ *Who can implement your recommendations?* You must know your target audience before you know your target journal.
- ✓ *Should you consider writing multiple manuscripts?* If you have multiple target audiences, you may want to consider writing a manuscript for each identified audience.
- ✓ *Does your audience read this journal?* Note how the journal describes its mission and goals on its website. Skim three to five of the journal's published articles and note how they describe their target audience. If an article does not specify its audience, look to how it describes its implications: who can use that information or implement those recommendations?
- ✓ *What kinds of articles does this journal's readership prefer?* Take note of the topics, methods, implications, level of detail, and length of the journal's published articles. Will your manuscript have similar features?

**\*\*If you need additional guidance with any of these steps, please contact NNPHI at [writingsupport@nnphi.org](mailto:writingsupport@nnphi.org).**



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## Step 3: Assess the journal for these secondary concerns.\*\*

Become familiar with the journal's citation record and accessibility of information. Some journals require fees from the general public to access or download published articles. You should also know the journal production process. The duration of time between the stages of manuscript acceptance, copyediting, proofing, and final printing can vary based on the journal.

- ✓ **Prestige:** What is the journal's impact factor? An impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. What is the journal's reputation in your field?
- ✓ **Ease of access:** Does the journal require paid subscription to access articles and if so, will the cost be prohibitive to your target audience? Is the journal's website easy to navigate? Does the journal mail print copies to subscribers?
- ✓ **Cost:** Does the journal charge authors for publication? Does it charge for printing images?
- ✓ **Timing:** How often does the journal publish? Historically, does it follow its stated schedule or fall behind? Does the journal have a backlog of articles waiting to be published? Make sure that the timeline for review, decision notification, and internal clearance processes are feasible for your writing product.

**Step 4: Determine which of the target journal's article types is the best fit for your manuscript.\*\*** Decide which format can help you best deliver your message to your priority audience. Most journals offer different article types, from standard research articles to brief reports, commentaries, and review articles.

- ✓ **Standard and original research** articles are the most common type of journal articles. They are detailed studies reporting new work and are classified as primary literature.
- ✓ **Brief reports** are, often preliminary studies, descriptions of unexpected and perhaps unexplained observations that can be described in a short report with a few illustrations (figures/tables), or even a single figure.
- ✓ **Commentaries** are short, narrowly focused articles that are usually commissioned by the journal and by invitation only. These articles are generally not peer-reviewed. Commentaries can be editorial in nature and cover aspects of an issue relevant to the scope of the journal.
- ✓ **Review articles** provide critical and constructive analysis of existing published literature in a field. They're usually structured to provide a summary of existing literature, analysis, and comparison. Often, they identify specific gaps or problems and provide recommendations for future research.

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