

# Writing for the Peer- Reviewed Literature

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# Questions to Ask: Peer-Review

- Before you even begin the process of writing, you need to ask yourself several questions:
  - What do I have to say?
  - Is it worth saying?
  - What is the right format for the message?
  - What is the audience for the message?
  - Where should I publish the message?
  - How can I best use paper and web-based resources?

# Choosing a Journal

- Factors to consider:
  - National or international audience?
  - Broad or specialty journal?
  - Language?
  - Journal's content area, culture and readers?
  - Exposure opportunities?
  - Chances of acceptance?
  - Impact factor, immediacy factor, or other publication measures?
  - Practical matters (time to publication, etc.)?
  - Are there other more appropriate outlets (books, popular media, internet, special issues, newsletters)?

# Choosing a Journal (2)

- Once you have identified some potential journals, you should always:
  - Review the journals' aims and scope carefully, as well as read several recent issues, to determine whether or not your manuscript will be a good fit.
  - Send a brief letter or email to the editors of the journals of choice to assess interest. Include the paper's title, abstract or other description.
  - Ask any additional questions (e.g. flexibility on paper length, typical times for the peer review process) that may influence your decision on where to submit.

# “Finer” Criteria

- Journal editors are most interested in publishing articles that are:
  - Feasible (answer a question using a robust method)
  - Interesting (particularly for their readership)
  - Novel
  - Ethical
  - Relevant

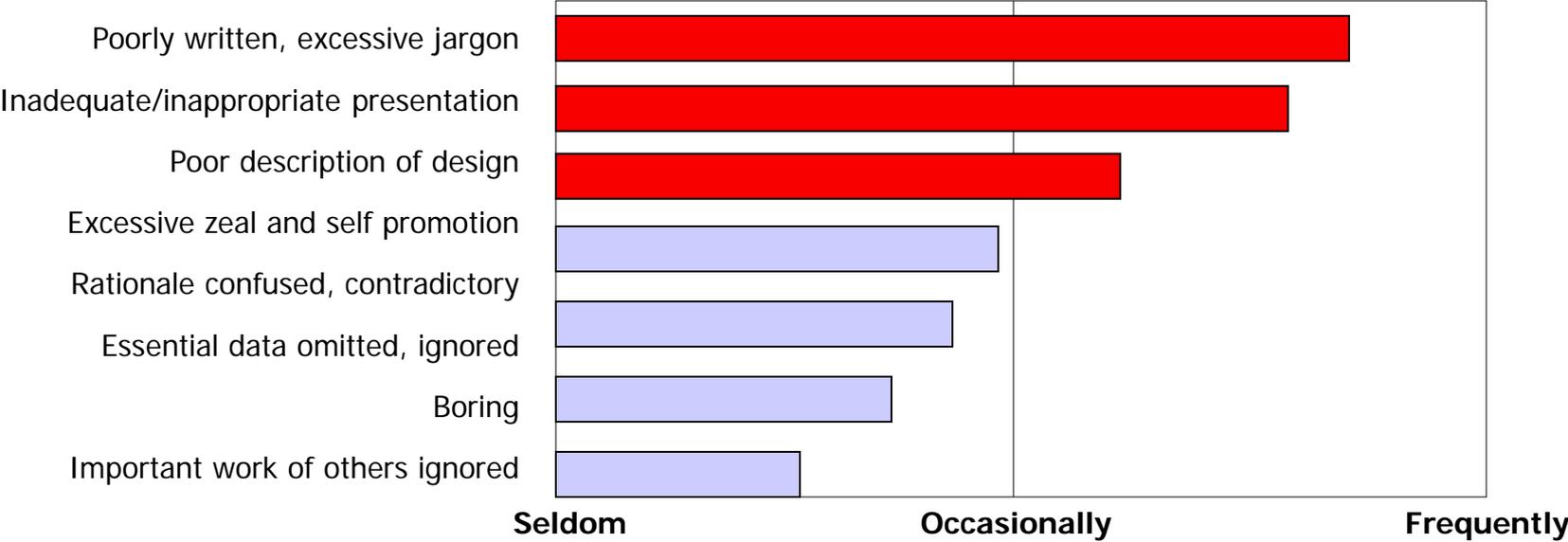
# Summary - Parts of a Paper

<b>Section</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Title	Clearly describes contents
Authors	Ensures recognition for the writer(s)
Abstract	Describes what was done in 150-250 words
Key Words (some journals)	Ensures the article is correctly identified in abstracting and indexing services
Introduction	Explains the problem and provides a review of the existing literature
Methods	Explains how the data were collected
Results	Describes what was discovered
Discussion	Discusses the implications of the findings
Acknowledgements	Ensures those who helped in the research are recognized
References	Ensures previously published work is recognized
Appendices (some journals)	Provides supplemental data for the expert reader, either in print or via the web

# Stylistic Considerations

- Use short words, sentences and paragraphs.
- Use nouns and verbs rather than adjectives and adverbs.
- Don't use jargon or abbreviations if at all possible.
- Avoid clichés.
- If the journal is not your first language, find a native speaker (if possible) to review the content and language of the paper before submission.

# Stylistic Considerations (2)



Byrne DW, Publishing Medical Research Papers, Williams and Wilkins, 1998

# Ethical Considerations

- Plagiarism.
- Fabrication and falsification.
- Authorship.
- Citation bias and errors .
- Ethical review and approval.
- Conflict of interest.
- Duplicate submission.
- Redundant publication / LPU.

- A good source of information on this can be obtained from the Committee on Publication Ethics ([www.publicationethics.org.uk](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk))

# Publication Misconduct

- **Fabrication:** making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- **Falsification:** manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- **Plagiarism:** the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

# Authorship

- Why does authorship matter?
  - Authorship is about credit, responsibility and accountability.
  - Academic life revolves around publication, both to get a job and to keep a job (“publish or perish”).
  - Research evaluation is based on publication.
  - Grants depend on/demand publication.
  - Publication brings fame (and the love of beautiful men and women).

# Authorship (2)

- Who should be an author?

According to accepted standards, authorship credit is based only on **substantial** contribution to:

conception and design, **or** data analysis and interpretation.

drafting the article **or** revising it critically for important intellectual content.

**and** final approval of the version to be published.

All authors included on a paper must fulfil the criteria.

No one who fulfils the criteria should be excluded.

# Competing Interests

- A person has a competing interest when she has an attribute that is *invisible* to the reader or editor but that *may* affect her judgement (financial, professional or other).
- Such conflicts are often unreported by authors because:
  1. Doing so implies “wickedness”; and
  2. They are confident that their judgement is not affected.

# Redundant Publication

- About 20% of papers/studies/data are published in more than one journal.
- Why is this a problem?
  - Positive studies more likely than negative studies to be published twice, distorting levels of evidence (e.g. flawed meta-analyses).
  - The amount of space in peer-reviewed journals is limited.
  - Wastes editors', reviewers' and readers' time.
  - Infringes in publishers' copyright.

# Redundant Publication (2)

- Redundant publication can be allowed in certain cases (e.g. guidelines, foreign-language translations, or commemorative articles).
- Conditions for acceptable redundancy:
  - Approval from the editors of both journals;
  - Priority of primary publication is respected;
  - Paper for secondary publication is intended for a different audience;
  - Secondary version faithfully reflects data and interpretations of primary version; and
  - A footnote on title page of secondary version states primary reference.