Writing Great Papers in International Journals

An Introduction for Researchers

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Agenda

1. Overview and self-assessment
2. Writing a good article
3. Choosing the right journal
4. The peer review process
5. The production process
6. Reaching your audience
7. More … Ethics; Open Research

Overview and self-assessment

Overview and self-assessment

Why publish?

- Publishing is one of the necessary steps embedded in the scientific research process
- Necessary for graduation and career progression

What to publish:

- Original results or methods
- Reviews or summaries of particular subject
- Manuscripts that advance the knowledge and understanding in a certain scientific field

What NOT to publish:

- Reports of no scientific interest
- Out-of-date work
- Duplications of previously published work
- Incorrect/unacceptable conclusions

Questions to answer before you begin writing

Think about **WHY** you want to publish your work:

✓Is it **interesting**?

✓Is it a current **hot topic**?

✓Have you **provided solutions** to some difficult problems?

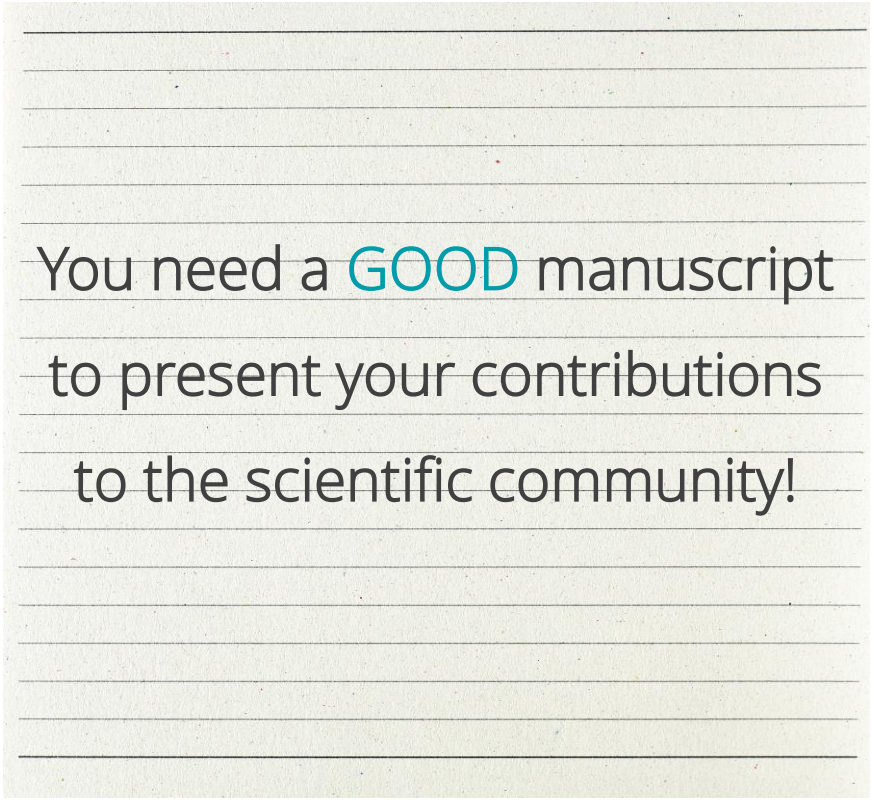
If you've answered all these questions with "YES", then start preparations for your manuscript!

What type of manuscript should you write?

- Full / Original article: The most important papers. Often substantial and significant completed pieces of research.
- Letters / Rapid communications / Short communications: quick and early communication of significant and original advances. Much shorter than full articles (check limitations).
- Review papers / Perspectives: summarize recent developments on a specific topic. Highlight important previously reported points. Not the place to introduce new information. Often invited.
- Conference papers: Excellent for disseminating early or in-progress research findings.

Ask your supervisor and your colleagues for advice!

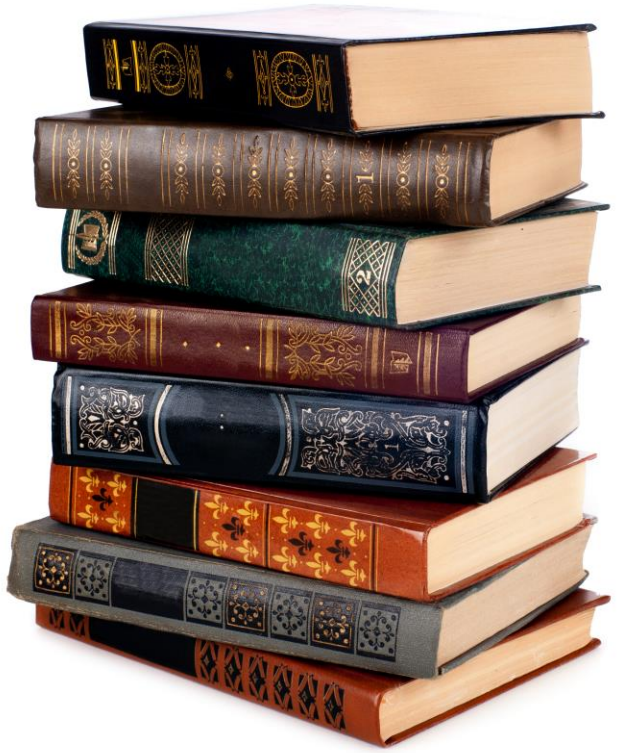
Basically…


You need a GOOD manuscript
to present your contributions
to the scientific community!

Writing a good article

What makes a good manuscript?

- Contains a clear, useful, and exciting scientific message
- Flows in a logical manner that the reader can follow
- Is formatted to showcase the material in the best way
- Is written in a style that transmits the message clearly



Presentation is critical

Writing a good manuscript will NOT be easy. Be prepared to work hard on it.

- **Cherish your work** – if you do not take care, why should the journal?
- There is **no secret recipe for success** – just some simple rules, dedication, and hard work.
- **Editors and reviewers** are all busy scientists, just like you – make things easy to **save their time**!

Remember, it's all about the reader, which includes editors and reviewers!

General structure of a full article

Title
Authors
Abstract
Keywords
Main text (IMRAD)
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- And
- Discussion (Conclusions)

Acknowledgments
References
Supplementary material

The Title

- This is your opportunity to attract the reader's attention
  - Remember: readers are the potential authors who will cite your article
- Keep it informative and concise
  - Reviewers will check whether the title is specific and whether it reflects the content of the manuscript
  - Try to keep it under 16 words long
  - Editors dislike titles that make no sense or fail to represent the subject matter adequately
- Avoid technical jargon, abbreviations, or "local" idioms
  - You wish to have a readership as large as possible, right?
- Discuss with your co-authors

Who *are* your co-authors?

- The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommends using the following four criteria to establish who is an "author":
  1. Making substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
  2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
  3. Having final approval of the version to be published; AND
  4. Being accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.
- Those who do not meet all four criteria should instead be acknowledged.
- Those who meet #1, should still have the chance to participate in the review, drafting, and final approval of the manuscript.

The Abstract

- A stand-alone statement
- Consider it the advertisement of your article
  - Should tell the prospective reader what you did and highlight the key findings
- Be accurate and specific
  - Use words which reflect the precise meaning
- A clear abstract will strongly influence whether or not your work is further considered
  - To Editors, a poor abstract probably indicates a poor paper
- Follow word limitations (usually 100 - 300 words)

The Keywords

- These are the labels of your manuscript and are critical to correct indexing and searching
  - Shouldn't be too broad or too narrow (think Google …)
- Use only those abbreviations that are firmly established in the field
- Essential for SEO (Search Engine Optimization)
- Check your journal's 'Author Guidelines'

The Introduction

- Your chance to convince readers of the importance of your work
- Describe the problem. Are there any existing solutions? What are their main limitations? And what do you hope to achieve?
- Provide a perspective consistent with the nature of the journal
- Introduce the main scientific publications on which your work is based
  - Cite a couple of original and important works, including recent review articles
- Editors generally dislike references irrelevant to the work, or inappropriate judgments on your own achievements

Avoid these pitfalls…

- Too wordy
- A mixed bag of introduction with results, discussion and conclusion
- Excessive use of expressions such as “novel”, “first time”, “first ever”, “paradigm-changing”

The Methods Section

- Details, details, details! A knowledgeable reader should be able to reproduce the experiment
- However, use references and Supplementary Materials for previously published procedures
  - Do not repeat the details of established methods
  - A general summary with reference is sufficient
- Reviewers will criticize incomplete or incorrect descriptions and may even recommend rejection

The Results

- Only representative results, essential for the Discussion, should be presented
  - Show data of secondary importance in Supplementary Materials
- Do not “hide” data in the hope of saving it for a later paper
  - You may lose evidence to support your conclusion
- Use sub-headings to keep results of the same type together
  - Easier to read and review
- Tell a clear and easy-to-understand story

The Discussion

- It is the most important section of your article
- Here you get the chance to SELL your data!
  - Many manuscripts are rejected because the Discussion is weak
- Make the Discussion correspond with the Results
  - But do not reiterate the results
- Compare the published results with yours
  - Do NOT ignore work that disagrees with your findings. Confront it and convince the reader that you are correct or better

The Conclusion

- Tells how your work advances the field from the present state of knowledge
- Without a clear conclusion, reviewers and readers will find it difficult to judge the work, and whether or not it merits publication in the journal
- Do NOT repeat the Abstract, or just list experimental results
  - Trivial statements of your results are unacceptable in this section
- Provide a clear scientific justification for your work by indicating possible applications and extensions
- Suggest future experiments and/or point out those that are underway

The Acknowledgements

- Recognize those who helped in the research
- Include individuals who have assisted you in your study:
  - Advisors
  - Financial supporters
  - Proofreaders
  - Suppliers who may have given materials

References

- More mistakes are found in the references than any other part of the manuscript
- Cite the main scientific publications on which your work is based
- Do not inflate the manuscript with too many references – it doesn't make it a better manuscript!
- Avoid excessive self-citations
- Avoid excessive citations to publications from the same region

You may get frustrated…

… so here's a tip!

Write Backwards!

- Data -> Figures and tables
- Methods, Results & Discussion
- Conclusions & Introduction
- Abstract and Title

Choosing the right journal

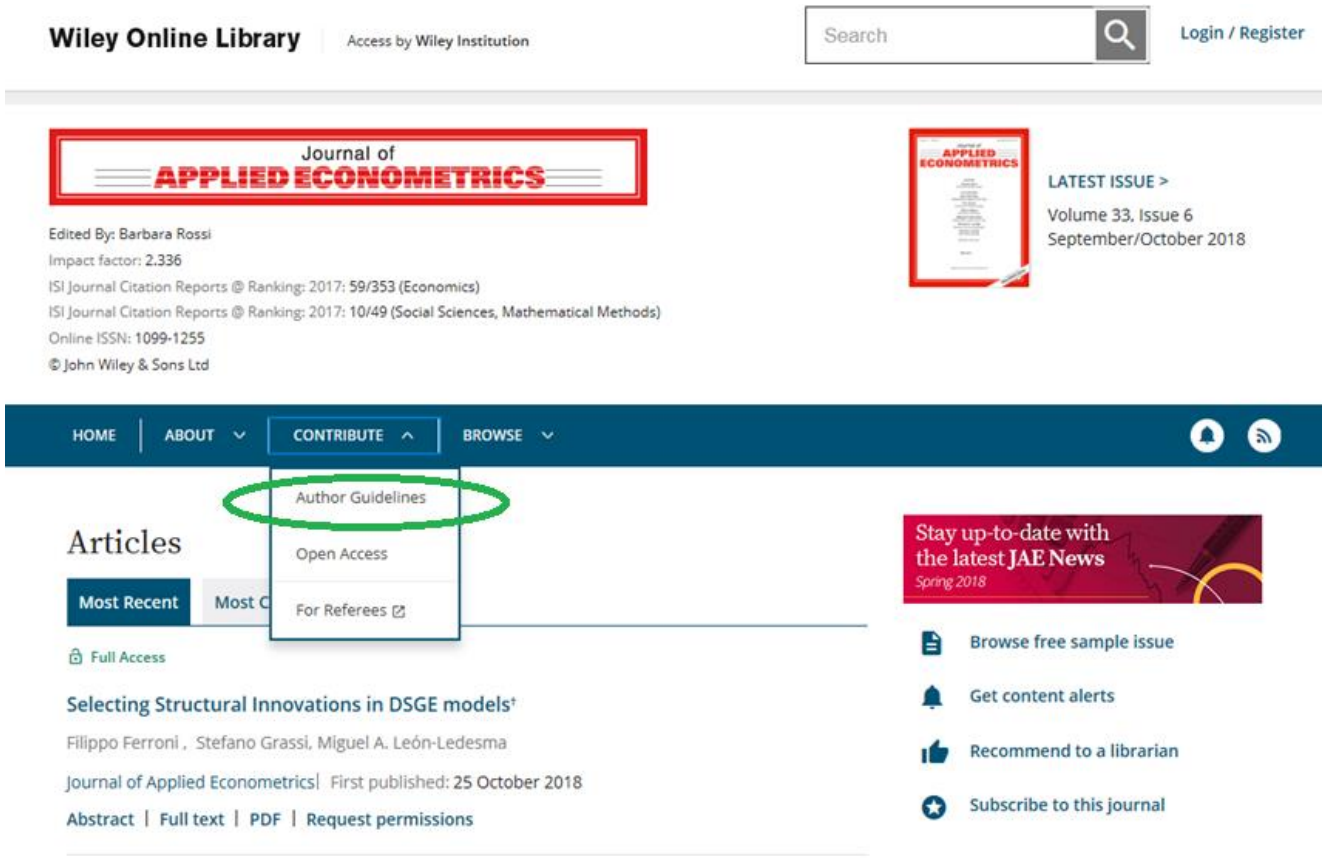
Choosing the right journal

- Look at your references – these will help you narrow your choices and come up with a shortlist
- Review recent publications in each candidate journal. Find out the hot topics, the accepted types of articles, etc.
- Turnaround times and acceptance rates
- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - Is the journal peer-reviewed? (Look out for predatory journals!)
  - Who is this journal's audience?
  - What is the average time to publication?
  - What is the journal's Impact Factor? (Ranking)

Choosing the right audience

- **Identify** the audience
- **Verify** their interest in the topic
- **Determine** the range of interest
    - Local versus International?

Do the research on each journal!



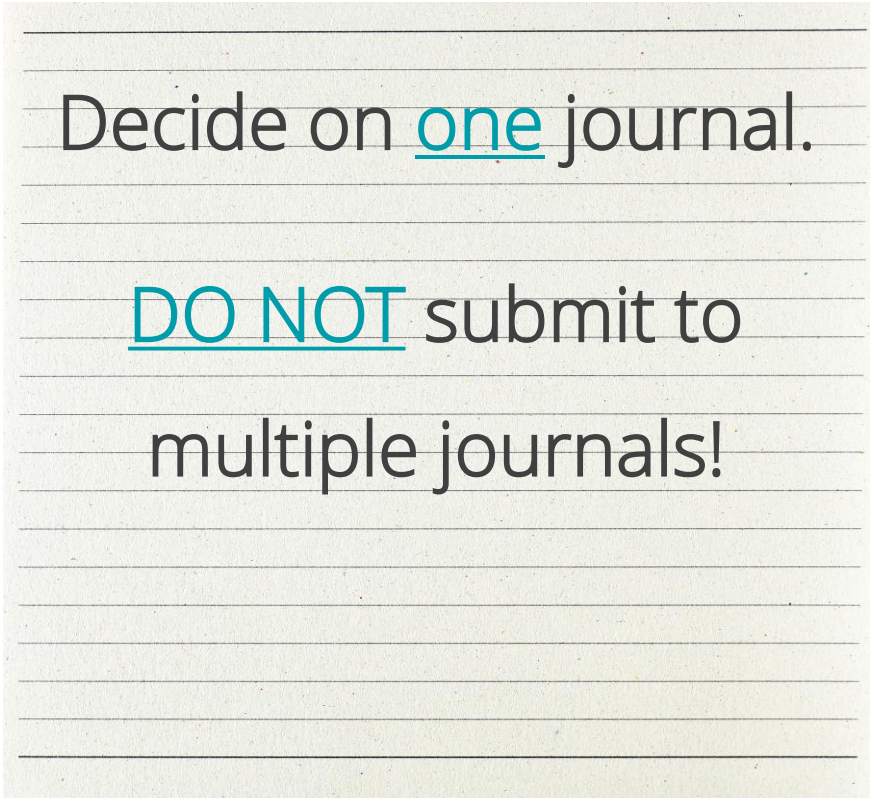
Most journals post 'AUTHOR GUIDELINES' online

Writing a good Cover Letter

Your opportunity to speak to the Editor directly:

- View it as a job application letter; you want to “sell” your work
- WHY did you submit the manuscript to THIS journal?
  - Do not summarize your manuscript, or repeat the abstract
  - Instead, mention what makes your manuscript special to this journal
- Mention special requirements, e.g. if you do not wish your manuscript to be reviewed by certain reviewers, and any conflicts of interest
- Most Editors won’t reject a manuscript just because the cover letter is bad, but a good cover letter may help you

And remember…

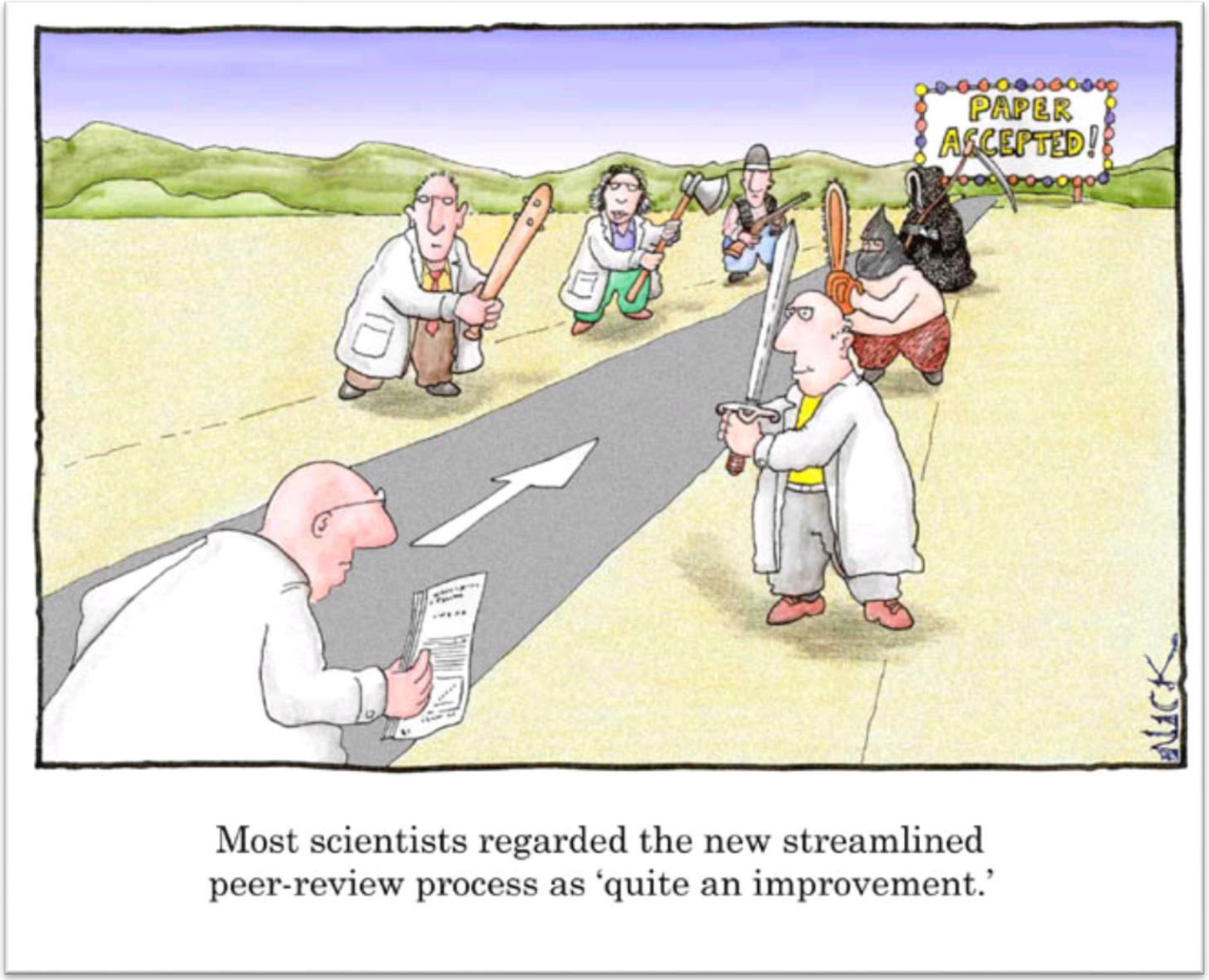


(Surviving)

The peer review process

It may feel …

a little like this



What does an Editor do?

- Pre-screens manuscripts, manages peer review, and makes decisions
- Commissions articles
- Attends conferences to keep up-to-date
- Writes content: editorials, news, etc.
- Develops journal's direction and philosophy

Initial Editorial Review

Many journals use a system of initial editorial review (triage)

- Editors may reject a manuscript without sending it for review

Why?

- The peer-review system is overloaded and Editors may wish to use reviewers only for those papers with a good probability of being accepted
- It is a disservice to ask reviewers to spend time on work that has clear and evident deficiencies or is outside the journal's scope

Types of peer review

- Single blinded (reviewers' identity kept anonymous from the author)
- Double blinded (author details are anonymized as well)
- Open peer review
- Post-publication peer review

What does a referee look for?

- Is the article within the journal's scope?
- Is it of sufficient quality, e.g.,
  - research, analysis and conclusions valid?
  - clear statement of aims and achievements?
  - presentation of figures and tables correct?
  - equations, calculations and formulae correct?
  - existing literature cited appropriately?
  - "Novelty" or "sound science"?
- Areas for improvement

Accept, reject, or revise…

Acceptance

- Without changes (rare)
- With minor changes

Rejection

- Without external referee reports (Editor)
- Based on reports
- Transfer …

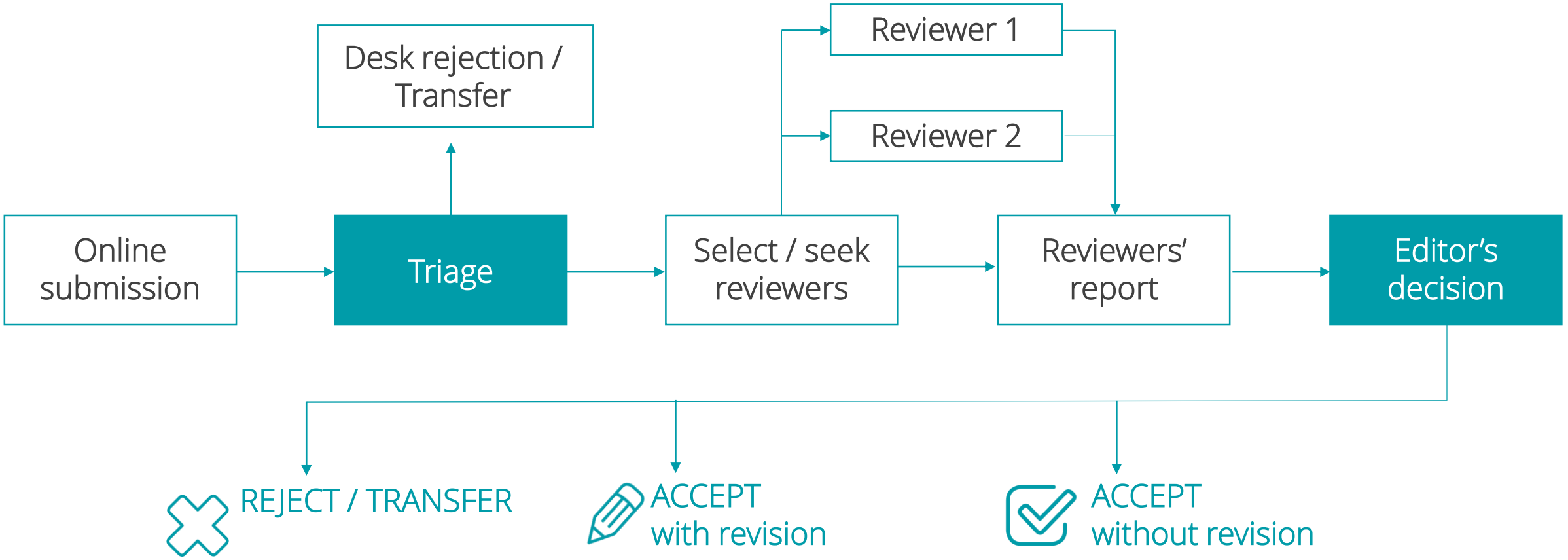
Revision

- Reconsideration and resubmission possible after major revisions

Common reasons for rejection (traditional journals)

- Not new
- Not interesting
- Not important
- Not valid
- Not objective
- Not appropriate
- Low priority (for that journal)

Peer review process illustrated



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Survival tips during peer review

Seek help with language and statistics if you need it

Understand that Editors and reviewers are trying to improve your paper

Accept feedback as a learning experience

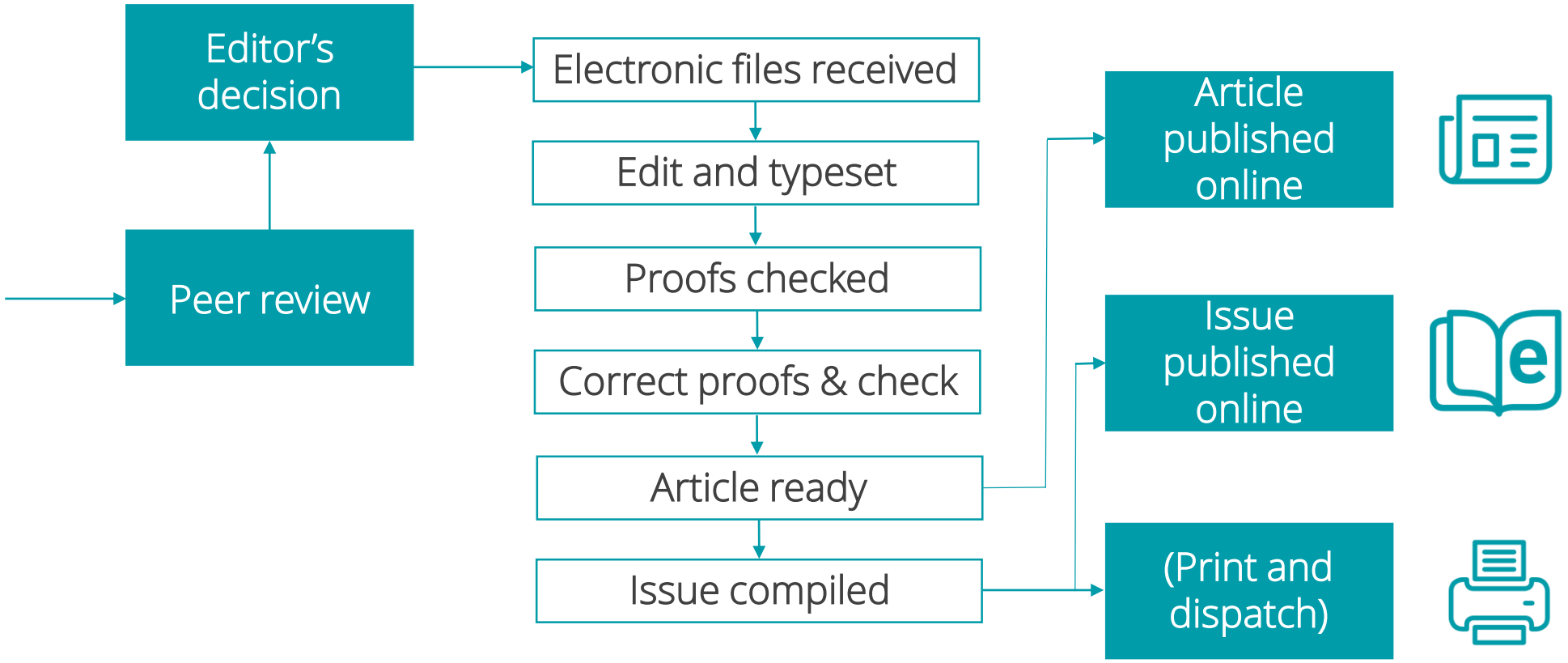
Persistence pays!
Answer questions and address revisions quickly

Seek out Editors at conferences, 'Meet the Editor' sessions etc.

Be polite! Responses may go back to reviewers!

The production process

Beyond the acceptance



Reaching your audience

How readers find content

- Search Engines
  - 96% of Wiley Online Library users come via Google
- Referring Sites
  - Library Links
  - Abstracting & Indexing Services
- Direct Links
  - Bookmarks
  - Table of content alerts, eMarketing and social media

Reaching your audience

1. Does your Library have access? If not, recommend a subscription to the journal.
2. University/Organization Press Office: Give them a description and your article's Wiley Online Library URL
3. Faculty Website: Update your professional or faculty website with the URL to your article online to showcase your research and to help readers.
4. Email Signature: Add the URL for your article to your email signature.
5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Visit Wiley Author Services to learn SEO tips, how to track your accepted articles through production, how to nominate up to ten colleagues for free access, and much more.
6. Social Media: Share your work with a link on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other accounts.
7. Blogs, Websites or Listservs: If you know of upcoming news coverage, give them the URL for your article – and let your Editor know!

More … Ethics; Open Research

Ethics: A few golden rules

- Papers should only be submitted to one journal at a time
- The same article should not be published in more than one place
- Several articles based on the same research must each make a unique contribution
- Acknowledge all those that have contributed to the work
- Visit Wiley's Best Practice Guidelines on Publishing Ethics for more guidance

Open Research: A Changing Landscape

- Open Access: fast-growing aspect of publishing
- Has varied by discipline, country, and publisher
- Open Access models: Green & Gold

Green

- Free access to a *version* of the publication via repository, often after an embargo period
- Neither reader nor author pays
- Due to mandates (by government, funders, and institutions)
- No guarantee of linked repositories in future

Gold

- Free access to the version of record of a publication via the publisher's own platform
- Author or funder pays an 'Article Publication Charge' (APC)

Open Research News:

Transparency and Sound Science

- Plan S
- Registered reports
- Open data
- “Sound science” journals (include negative/null results)
- How can we help to get this paper *accepted* rather than reject it?
- Transparent peer review

Thank you for your attention.

Any questions?

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And lastly… Good Luck!

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