

# How to Write an Article for Publication

Things I wish someone would  
have told me!

# Overview

- Making a commitment to Write
- Deciding what to write
- Tips for the writing process

# A commitment to writing

- What does commitment mean to you?
- What gets in your way?
- Three examples that work
- What is best for you and what is your action plan?

# What should I write?

- Goals of writing
- Where do I start?

# Goals of Writing

- Sharing something new
- Building the body of professional knowledge
- Enhancing your own market value
- Merit pay, promotions, tenure
- Grant applications
- It feels great to see your name in print!

# Where do I start?

- An interesting case or group of patients
- A clinical observation
- A clinical question
- A project in which you have participated
- An interesting topic
- Ask if you can assist another
- Comparison with existing literature
- “Further research is needed...”

# Tips for the Writing Process

- Eight Simple Steps to Success!
- A structured process that will produce results
- Other ways work as well...

# Step 1: Calendar your Time

- Reflect on your commitment
- Keep the time sacred
- There will be things that get in your way. These things will not go away. Learn to deal with it.



# Step 2: Clearly Define your Goal

- Identify the type of manuscript you will prepare
- Select your target journal
- Review similar types of articles in the same journal where you wish to publish

# Types of Articles

- Case Report
- Case Series
- Literature Review
- Book Review
- Practice Strategies (professional journals)
- Systematic Review and Meta-analysis
- Observational Study
- Experimental Study
- Clinical Intervention Study

# Which journal is best for my article?

- Peer Reviewed vs. Non-peer Reviewed
- Journal Impact Factor
- Profession – specific publications
- How do I pick?

# Peer Reviewed vs. Non-peer Reviewed

- Whether it appears in print, a combination of print and electronic forms, or only in electronic form, a peer reviewed journal is one in which each feature article has been examined by people with credentials in the article's field of study before it is published.
- Papers which appear in sources like these are considered to be as reliable as humanly possible.
- In "double blind" peer review, neither the author nor the reviewers know each others' identities. Not all peer review is double blind. As well, the literature of any profession may include journals written both for practitioners and for theorists.
- You can sometimes categorize a journal just by looking at its first and last few pages. Check to see if there is a page listing the Editorial Board, and see what credentials they have. If there is a page containing "instructions for authors", it may actually say the journal is peer reviewed. If the instructions mention submitting several copies, with your name on the front page but not anywhere else in the manuscript, that is your cue that the journal uses double blind peer review.
- <http://valinor.ca/peer-review.html>

# Journal Impact Factor

- Science Citation Index – citations are a measure of impact of a paper on fellow researchers
- Used to evaluate a journal's relative importance
- Ask your Library Professional!

# Journal Impact Factor Calculation

- Numerator = number of citations in a given year to all articles published in the preceding 2 years
- Denominator = number of source articles published in the preceding 2 years
- Cites to recent articles / number of recent articles

# How do I pick?

- Which journal has published articles similar to yours?
- Which journal has the best reputation and largest readership?
- Which journal has the shortest time to publication, e.g. backlog or review process?
- Which journal has the clearest guidelines for authors?

# Journal Requirements and Guidelines

- Check the websites or copies of the journals
- Check here first, before you begin writing your first word!



# Review Guidelines

- If possible, find a copy of the guidelines that will be used by peer reviewers to evaluate your manuscript
- Examples included in handout:
  - Ophthalmology
  - Academic Medicine
- A good way to start your outline as well as checking your paper before submission

# Review Similar Types of Articles

- Same manuscript type, same journal
- Don't read for content!
- Read for style, flow, formatting
- Make an outline of the bones of each article
- Read at least 5, the more you read the easier it will be to write
- Keep these to refer back to for questions that will come up

# Step 3: Format Your Article

- Create an outline
- Identify and clarify the themes you will include in the article
- Identify areas that need further development

# Outlining

- Start with the guidelines for authors and/or reviewer guidelines
- Identify the larger sections first, then the more specific details you need to include
- Identify where your references are going to fit in (usually in background / introduction or conclusions / discussion)
- Do Abstract and Key Words last

# Outlining Example – Case Report

- Introduction
- Case Report
- Pathologic (Clinical) Findings
- Discussion

# Outlining Example – Case Report

- Introduction
  - Background
  - Literature Review
  - Justification for this Report

# Outlining Example – Case Report

- Introduction

  - Background

    - description of condition

    - epidemiology of condition

    - pathophysiology of condition

    - risk factors, genetics, links

    - diagnostic standards

# Outlining Example – Case Report

- Introduction
  - Background
  - Literature Review
    - reported symptoms and signs
    - associated conditions / differential
    - management strategies



# Outlining Example – Case Report

- Introduction
  - Background
  - Literature Review
  - Justification for this Report
    - first case(?)
    - unique case
    - disclaimer: “We were unable to find any previous reports of this in the literature...”

# Identify and Clarify Themes

- What are the important themes that will emerge in the introduction and discussion sections?
- Compliance / Adherence
- Health Literacy
- Diagnostic Testing
- Rehabilitation

# Identify Areas that Need Development

- I don't know much about...
- I need more references for...
- This needs to be clarified...
- Highlight or **mark** these areas in the text

# Step 4: References!

- Identify search terms and key words
- Create a system for managing your references
- Understand appropriate use of citations

# Search Terms and Key Words

- MESH terms
- From emerging themes
- From outline
- [www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)
- Google scholar
- Librarians!

# Managing references

- MircoSoft Word
- End Notes
- Biblioscape
- Pro Cite
- 3 x 5 cards
- Abstract sorting
- Ask your Librarian!

# Use of Citations

- If you're not sure – double check!
- To support assertions
- To provide evidence of review of the literature
- “Everyone knows...”

# Step 5: Flow to First Draft

- Go from outline to sentences and paragraphs
- Paragraph structure
- Transitional sentences
- Review articles from Step 2



# Know yourself...

- Do you ramble, providing too much information and lacking in clarity while you go on and on?
- Do you use jargon?
- Do you use 7 long words when 2 that are short and simple would do just as well?
- Do you use 5 short sentences when one sentence, phrased correctly, would be more effective?
- Do you use parentheses (to explain what I really mean or give an example, such as)?

# Step 6: Refine

- Go from first draft to second draft
- Revision, Revision, Revision
- Writing Style
- Great Resource:  
Peat E, Elliott E, Baur L, Keena V. Scientific Writing:  
Easy When You Know How. London: BMJ Books, 2002

# Step 7: Seek Input and Advice

- Request a review from a trusted source
- Be specific about what you are asking for

# People to Ask...

- Colleague who has published previously
- Colleague with expertise in topical area
- Department Chair
- Your supervisor...

# Be Specific

- Check for clarity of thought
- Make sure manuscript remains on topic and focused
- Is material covered in enough depth
- Ways to make writing more succinct
- Flow of wording
- Grammar, spelling and use of language
- Technical terms

# Step 8: Incorporate Comments and Edits

- Get used to constructive criticism
- Line up all of the edits at one time to avoid conflicting advice
- Evaluate each suggestion
- Incorporate editing
- Let it sit a few days

# Another set of eyes

- Before submission – ask at least one other person to review!
- Always spell check
- Look for errors in tables
- Check for incomplete reference citations or references out of order
  
- Submission!

# Tips: Writing Partners

- Know your own strengths and weaknesses
- Look for someone who compliments your abilities
- Being accountable to another person helps you keep on track and complete writing projects
- Sharing the experience is a good way to get started



# Tips: Breaking the Block

- Write the “methods” section first
- Set a timer for 20 minutes and write without self-editing
- Tackle the “easiest” thing first
- Make charts, tables, graphs first then write the description of what they consist of
- Give yourself permission to write poorly, you will clean it up later anyway

# Tips: Understand The Review Process

- Editor receives – first screening
- Sent to a member of the review board
- May also be sent to content experts
- Decision rendered:
  - accept
  - accept with minor revisions
  - resubmit after major revisions (re-review)
  - reject
- Resubmission

# Tips: Get Used to the Review Process

- Suggestions, edits, questions are to your benefit!
- Your article should not go through the process and remain unchanged
- You're almost there – don't stop
- Don't let it sit – there is a time limit!

# Tips: Determining Authorship

- Writing partners, another set of eyes, now what?
- Who gets listed?
- What is the order?
- When do you use an acknowledgement?

# Determining Authorship

- Each author must have made a significant intellectual contribution to the project and/or to the writing of the paper
- <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/integrity/authorship.html>
- <http://www.apastyle.org/authorship.html>
- Best to decide authorship FIRST or early in the process

# Acknowledgements

- Not used for moral or technical support
- Not used for someone “just doing their job”
- Provision of extensive statistical support, provision of patients, provision of necessary equipment
- “Without which the project could not have been completed”

# Do's and Don'ts

- Set aside time to write
- Know the expectations of the journal
- Read similar articles
- Be very vigilant to avoid possible plagiarism
- Don't take the critiques personally!
- Don't give up during the process
- Don't be afraid to ask for help

# Discussion

Thank you!