

Where should I publish?

A library handout for researchers

Includes:



5 warning signs of a predatory journal



7 essential questions to ask when evaluating a journal



Checklist to determine whether a journal is reputable



Tools to find journals based on various selection criteria



Table of contents

1 | Finding a journal: How and where to search for suitable titles

2 | Evaluating a journal: 7 essential questions to ask, covering:



Journal scope



Journal quality



Journal ethics



By reviewing and applying the **dos** and **don'ts** within these pages, you will increase the likelihood of publishing in the right journal for your work.

Identifying the right title isn't easy. In addition to using this guide, **consider booking a consultation with a librarian** to help you identify and apply your selection criteria.

Finding a journal

Start the search by consulting (and extending) your network:



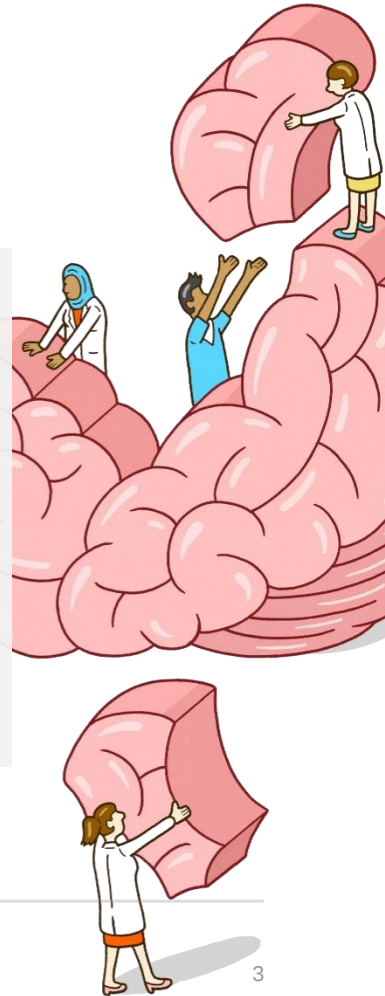
Ask **colleagues and peers** for their recommendations



Gain insight from a **supervisor, mentor and authors you read**



Book a consultation with a **librarian**



Finding a journal

Continue online searching scholarly resources:



Look at where the **articles you have cited** were published



Note the **journals referenced** in the bibliography of key papers in your field



Search for **authors in your field** and discover where they are publishing

Finding a journal

When you search for a journal, you will want to consider:



“Begin with the end in mind.”

—Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*



What is your **manuscript format**, e.g., original research article or review?



Do you want or need to publish **open access**?



Are you seeking a title with a **multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary** focus?



Do you want to publish with a **specific publisher**?



Are you publishing **research data or other outputs** alongside the article?

Tools to help you find a journal: open access

A few of the tools available to help you find open access (OA) journals include:

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

- Community-curated online directory
- Indexes and links to open access, peer-reviewed journals

Enago Open Access Journal Finder

- Suggests titles based on your manuscript keywords, title or abstract
- All titles are DOAJ certified

Scopus

- A source-neutral, expertly curated abstract and citation database
- Open access filter for journals

In addition, you can publish your article open access in many hybrid journals, which combine subscription and OA content.

If your research has funding support, check for any publication requirements.



Tools to help you find a journal: multidisciplinary

A few of the tools and platforms available to help you identify potential titles, whatever your discipline or field, include:

Edanz Journal Selector

- Search for journals by keywords, field of study, title, publisher or abstract

JournalGuide

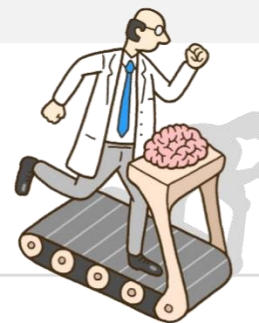
- Search for journals by keywords, title, publisher or category. Select up to three journals to compare side by side

Scopus

- Search by subject area, title, publisher and ISSN. Compare up to 10 journals side by side on 7 metrics

Ulrichsweb Global Serials Directory

- Search by title, ISSN or search term. Includes scholarly journals, popular magazines, newsletters and more



Tools to help you find a journal: publisher specific

Platforms available to help you identify potential titles by publisher include:

Elsevier JournalFinder

- Uses smart search technology to match the title and abstract of your manuscript to potential Elsevier titles

Springer Nature journal suggester

- Journal-matching technology finds relevant Springer Nature journals based on your manuscript details

Wiley Journal Finder (Beta)

- Draws on information in the manuscript title and abstract to create a list of potential Wiley journals



Evaluating a journal

7 key questions to consider as you evaluate the journals you have identified:

1. Is the manuscript the **right fit** for the journal?
2. Are there any **funder/institution mandates** to consider?
3. Is the journal visible in the **communities** you want to reach?
4. Is there a reasonable **chance of acceptance**?
5. Is the journal **indexed** in all the relevant databases?
6. What do the journal **metrics** reveal?
7. Is the journal **reputable**, including practicing robust peer review?



Journal scope

Question 1: Is the manuscript the right fit for the journal?



Do research the journal's aims and scope on the journal information page, usually found on the publisher's website (more details may be available in the journal's author guidelines). Also look at recent articles. Based on this information, assess whether your paper is a good fit.



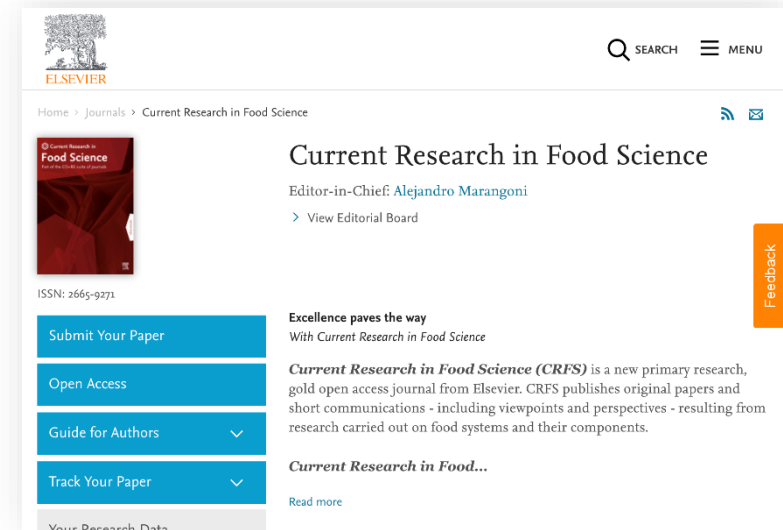
Don't submit without checking the journal's aims and scope. A key reason editors immediately reject manuscripts is that the paper is a poor fit for that journal.

Journal scope

Question 1: Is the manuscript the right fit for the journal?

Investigate the journal to discover:

- Subject areas covered
- Type of articles considered
- Disciplines covered
- Whether supplemental files are welcome
- Regional or global reach



The screenshot shows the Elsevier website for the journal 'Current Research in Food Science'. The page features the Elsevier logo at the top left, a search bar and menu icon at the top right, and a breadcrumb trail: Home > Journals > Current Research in Food Science. The journal cover image is displayed on the left, with the ISSN 2665-9271 below it. A vertical orange 'Feedback' button is on the right. The main content area includes the journal title, Editor-in-Chief Alejandro Marangoni, and a 'View Editorial Board' link. Below this is a section titled 'Excellence paves the way' with a sub-header 'With Current Research in Food Science'. The text describes the journal as a new primary research, gold open access journal from Elsevier, publishing original papers and short communications. A 'Read more' link is provided at the bottom of this section. On the left side of the page, there are four blue buttons: 'Submit Your Paper', 'Open Access', 'Guide for Authors', and 'Track Your Paper', each with a downward arrow. At the very bottom, there is a 'Your Research Data' section.

Journal scope

Question 1: Is the manuscript the right fit for the journal?

Trends

In recent years, new forms of articles have emerged, often alongside journals specifically developed to publish them. Journals are now available that publish descriptions of your data, methods, hardware or software to enhance reproducibility.

You can now

Select titles that publish the components of your study as separate standalone articles or create video articles.

Share 3D visualizations of your scientific models or publish the data underlying your study.

Choose journals that publish sound rather than novel science, or titles that accept submissions from all disciplines, or focus on those with a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach.

Journal scope

Question 2: Are there any funder/institutional mandates to consider?



Do ensure the journal aligns with the funder or institutional requirements regarding publication. The journal information page will explain options around open access, data publication and use of persistent identifiers. Also, publisher websites will often provide information on how to comply with specific funding body mandates.



Don't forget to investigate institutional or funder requirements regarding publication. Failure to comply could jeopardize future funding or collaboration opportunities.

Journal scope

Question 3: Is the journal read in the communities you want to reach?



Do check the journal's aims and scope for information on readership. In the case of Elsevier, selected journals display a map showing where, and how often, the journal content has been downloaded. These maps are accessible via the Journal Insights link on the journal information page.



Do check whether colleagues and mentors read and recommend the journal. Find out if the journal's papers are indexed in databases relevant to your subject area, e.g., PubMed in the case of life science and biomedical research.



Don't publish in journals that aren't reaching the audiences who can benefit from your work.

Journal scope

Question 4: Is there a reasonable chance of acceptance?



Do look for the acceptance/rejection rate and then factor it into your decision-making process. Not all journals may offer this information. This can be found for Elsevier journals within the Elsevier JournalFinder.



Don't submit to a journal extremely unlikely to accept your paper, especially if quick publication is a priority. You lose the time spent submitting and waiting for editor and reviewer comments. If you receive constructive comments upon rejection, be sure to incorporate them before submitting to a new journal.

Journal scope

Question 4: Is there a reasonable chance of acceptance?



TIP

It can be tempting to submit to the journal with the highest impact metrics, or the most recognized name in the field. However, these often have the highest rejection rates. That doesn't mean your manuscript won't be accepted — just that it's probably only worth submitting if it meets all the journal's criteria.

Journal quality

Question 5: Is the journal indexed by relevant databases?



Do search for the journal in a scholarly database that has a rigorous selection process, such as Scopus or Web of Science.



Don't rely solely on the journal's claim to be listed in databases. Predatory journals may make false claims.

Journal quality

Question 5: Is the journal indexed by relevant databases?



TIP Listed in tools and databases

Check whether the journal is listed in a database with a journal review process. For example, all journals listed in Scopus are reviewed by an independent Content Selection and Advisory Board (CSAB), comprising subject experts from around the world.

For inclusion in Scopus, journals must have

- Peer review
- English abstracts
- Regular publication (i.e., an ISSN)
- Roman script references
- A publishing ethics statement

They are then assessed against **14 quantitative and qualitative selection criteria** that look at journal policy, quality of content, journal standing, regularity and online availability.

Note

If it's a **new journal**, there may be a time lapse before it's included in databases.

Journal quality

Question 6: What do the metrics reveal?



Do search within an abstract and citation database such as Scopus that allows you to find and compare journals based on several citation metrics.



Don't rely solely upon one number or type of metric when deciding where to publish.

Knowing how the journal content has previously performed can help you understand its reach and impact.

Journal quality

Question 6: What do the metrics reveal?

Trends

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and other initiatives have recommended a reduced focus on the Impact Factor. Alternative approaches include the NIH's Relative Citation Ratio and Elsevier's CiteScore (both launched in 2016).

In 2017, R-factors were proposed to highlight the successful reproducibility of a study. While these, and the attention metrics offered by Plum Analytics, Newsflo and Altmetric.com, are gaining in popularity, the hunt is still on for a metric that measures not just attention, but the sentiment behind it. The ability to measure societal impact is another key goal. In addition, some believe new metrics measuring openness, data quality and collaboration are required.

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



“There is no universally agreed definition of a predatory journal or publisher. However, organizations like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) define global publication ethics standards — predatory journals do not meet those standards.”

—Karen Holland, Prof. Peter Brimblecombe, Dr. Wim Meester and Susanne Steiginga,
The importance of high-quality content: curation and reevaluation in Scopus

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



Don't ignore the warning signs of a predatory journal, which may include one or more of the following:

1. It actively and aggressively solicits submissions, often for a fee.
2. The “call for paper” emails contain spelling and grammar mistakes.
3. It has a short publication history, e.g., four issues or fewer, even though the journal has existed for several years.
4. Its scope is very broad, or the content published doesn't match its stated aims and scope.
5. It offers rapid publication (e.g., within 48 hours).

Publishing in a predatory journal can have negative consequences:

Your article is not perceived as meeting a quality standard because it lacks peer review.

Article processing charges (APCs) provided by your funder or institution are lost, potentially impacting future grant or career progression opportunities.

The reach of your work could be limited if the journal is not indexed in leading databases, and the work itself may be lost if it's not archived correctly.

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



Do use the following checklist of questions to determine whether a journal is reputable. And check with a librarian if you have any questions.

- ☐ Is it listed in the relevant journal finder tools and databases?
- ☐ Is it clear who the editor(s) and editorial board are?
- ☐ Is it enrolled in COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)?
- ☐ Does it perform some form of peer review?
- ☐ Can you tell who owns the journal?
- ☐ Are APCs and the timing of fees clear?
- ☐ Is the journal published by a well-known, reputable society, academic press or publishing house?
- ☐ Does the publisher provide details about open access licenses and their associated conditions?

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



TIP Committee on Publication Ethics

Most reputable publishers enroll their journals in COPE. This information is usually visible on the publisher website — COPE membership provides editors and authors with the reassurance that comprehensive publishing and research ethics guidelines will be followed. (COPE has a new rule that journals can't be approved for membership until they are at least a year old, so a brand new journal may be reputable but just not eligible for membership yet.)

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



TIP Journal management

Check the address and contact details for the publisher and ensure they sound plausible, e.g., no mobile phone numbers or obvious residential addresses.

Be careful if the editor and publisher is the same person as this can be a warning sign, although it doesn't always mean the journal is suspect.

If you aren't familiar with the editor or members of the editorial board, **verify** that they exist. If their participation seems unlikely, check their bios on their institution or personal websites to see if they mention their editorial role for that journal.

Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?



TIP Peer review

Peer review is regarded as the cornerstone of scholarly publishing — a valuable stamp of approval for a published manuscript. If a journal's submission to publication time is measured in hours or days, or the APC is payable up front, the journal is unlikely to offer robust peer review. A reputable journal is open about its peer review process, describing whether it's single or double blind, pre- or post-publication, etc.



Journal ethics

Question 7: Is the journal reputable?

APCs and licenses for publishing open access

Find out what article publishing charges (APCs) are typical by checking publishers' pricing information to publish open access. If there is a request to pay up front, be cautious: reputable open access journals only invoice if an article is accepted for publication.

It should be easy to find details about the open access license options and their associated conditions — they are generally featured on the journal's information page or in the author guidelines. Many publishers offer one or more of the licenses developed by the non-profit organization Creative Commons. These licenses are usually recognizable by the prefix CC BY.

Additional resources

Other useful online resources and checklists to help answer the question “Where should I publish?” include:

- **Think. Check. Submit.** was launched by a coalition of scholarly organizations in response to deceptive or predatory publishing. It includes a short but comprehensive checklist covering points such as a journal's transparency around ownership, peer review and fees (if any).
- **Be iNFORMEd** is a similar checklist. Developed by Duke University Medical Center Library and Archives in Durham, NC, US, it is designed to assess the quality of a journal or publisher.
- **Elsevier Researcher Academy** offers free e-learning modules on the Publication Process and other topics related to your research journey.
- **How to Assess a Journal** is a useful infographic from CARL (the Canadian Association of Research Libraries) to guide researchers through journal assessment.
- **Dalhousie University predatory journal guide** contains useful tips to help you spot a predatory publisher.

URLs for links in this guide

- CARL (Canadian Association of Research Libraries) journal assessment guide: <http://www.carl-abrc.ca/how-to-assess-a-journal/>
- COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics): <https://publicationethics.org/>
- Creative Commons: <https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/licensing-types-examples/>
- Dalhousie University predatory journal guide: <http://dal.ca.libguides.com/c.php?g=257122&p=2830098>
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): <https://doaj.org/>
- Duke University Medical Center Library and Archives Be iNFORMEd guide: <https://guides.mclibrary.duke.edu/beinformed>
- Elsevier Journal Finder: <https://journalfinder.elsevier.com/>
- Elsevier Researcher Academy: <https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/>
- Enago Open Access Journal Finder: <https://www.enago.com/academy/journal-finder/>
- JournalGuide: <https://www.journalguide.com/>
- Scopus: <https://www.scopus.com>
- Springer Nature journal suggester: <https://journalsuggester.springer.com/>
- Think. Check. Submit: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- UlrichsWeb Global Serials Directory: <http://ulrichsweb.serialssolutions.com/login>
- Wiley Journal Finder (Beta): <https://journalfinder.wiley.com>

Sources

Be INFORMEd: Checklist. Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives.

<https://guides.mclibrary.duke.edu/beinformed>

A guide to journal citation metrics. Online learning module. Elsevier Researcher Academy.

<https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/finding-right-journal/guide-journal-citation-metrics>

How to identify the right journal to publish in. Online learning module. Elsevier Researcher Academy.

<https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/finding-right-journal/identify-right-journal-publish>

Hurrell, A., Lange, J., Lapierre, D., Yates, E., & Brin, L. How to Assess a Journal. Canadian Association of Research Libraries.

<http://www.carl-abrc.ca/how-to-assess-a-journal/>

The importance of high-quality content: curation and reevaluation in Scopus

<https://www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence/resource-library/scopus-high-quality-content>

New web services that help authors choose journals. *Learned Publishing*. Forrester, A., Björk, B & Tenopir, C. 03 August 2017,

<https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1112>

Sources

Supporting Value: How Rigorous Processes & Collaborations Help Ensure Research Integrity

https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/797709/ResearchIntegrityWhitepaper.pdf

Think. Check. Submit.

<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

What is a predatory journal? LibGuides: Open Access. Dalhousie University Libraries.

<http://dal.ca/libguides.com/c.php?g=257122&p=2830098>