

Everything you wanted to know about getting  
published (but were afraid to ask)

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The  
ECONOMIC  
JOURNAL



# What is this Session about?

- Given the research you have done:
  - What can you do to increase the chance of getting it published?
  - Or, to make the publication experience more productive?
- This session is meant to be useful to you so please ask questions.



What is the answer to the question how do you get published?



Write a good paper!!!!



# 1: Preparing a Paper for Submission

There are several questions you need to know the answer to:

- A. How important is the research question; who might want to read your paper?
- B. What is the contribution? A new method/result or an old method/result applied to a new situation/data.
- C. How clear and well-organised is it?
- D. How focussed is it?



# 1A How important is the research question; who might read your paper.

This affects where you should submit. Journals are roughly divided into

## **General Interest**

### *Top 5*

Econometrica, AER, REStud, JPE, QJE

### *Second Tier*

Restat, IER, EJ, JEEA, QE, AEJ,...

## **Field**

JET, JFin, JIntEcon, JPubEcon, JoLE, JMonEcon, Rand, TE etc



# 1B What is the Contribution?

- What does someone who knows the literature learn from reading your paper that they didn't know before?
- Write an elevator speech/tweet.
- Be honest, or if not get others' opinions – present it, go to conferences, get a co-author!
- Most PhD papers are: “an old method/result applied to a new situation/data”. The natural home for this kind of paper is a field journal.
- General interest journals should mainly apply if you think your contribution to international economics (say) is of interest to a labour economics. Or if you have a method/result that applies to many fields



# 1C. How clear/well organized Is it

- Writing a academic paper is not like writing a thriller.
- There should be absolutely no surprises or cliff hangers.
- The contribution of the paper should be the first thing you say and (if possible) the first result you state.
- The punch line of each section should be stated in the first paragraph of that section.
- What is written should be readily understandable by any of your fellow students.
- Lay the paper out in the standard format.
- The notation and terminology should be consistent with standard practice, “agent”, “individual”, “player”,...

“If it doesn’t look easy you haven’t worked hard enough.”



# 1C. How clear/well organized Is it

Here's an example – consider the paragraph...

“The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups depending on their makeup. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo any particular endeavour That is it is better to do too few things at once rather than too many...”



# 1C. How clear/well organized Is it

Now consider...

**This is how you wash clothes.** The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups depending on their makeup. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo any particular endeavour. That is it is better to do too few things at once rather than too many." *Bransford and Johnson 1972.*





## 1D. How Focussed is it?

*“Do one thing and do it completely.”* R. Blundell

Do not try to do many things at the same time (this usually is a result of lack of faith in the original idea).

No kitchen sink - do not write all you know about a subject.

*“Try to keep the paper short”* Imran Rasul

A submitted paper *\*is not\** the same as a chapter of a PhD nor is it a jmp.

Frank Hahn used to say *“if the structure of DNA can be described in 6 pages why do you need so many?”*

# 1. Additional Considerations

Once you've an idea about the journal you want to submit to, then look carefully at the journal

- What sort of papers does it publish?
- What are the editors' interests?
- Who are the associate editors?



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

How do journals work and what does this mean for authors.

### Step 1: Submission

What you should submit is:

A paper (at this stage it does not need to be typeset ready).

A short letter of submission detailing the submission history of the paper and any previous referee reports you want to share with the editor.



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

### Step 1: Submission

The paper gets allocated to an editor. The editor skims the paper and decides whether **to screen** **reject** the paper or **to send it to referees**.



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

### Step 1: Submission

#### Why screen reject?

Paper is not suitable, or the paper is so poor as to not have a chance with regular referees.

The introduction is important here – the editor needs to get a quick idea of what your paper does, that it is interesting, that the authors understand the contribution.

Do not be discouraged by a screen reject decision.



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

### Step 1: Submission

### Send to Referees?

Here the bibliography and any google cites are important.



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

### Step 2: Referees

These are people like your supervisor who are trying to figure out: 1) whether they learned something new from your work and 2) whether this result should be shared with other economists.

Clarity, Focus, Contribution, Legibility all matter here.

Referees write reports and letters to the editor.

The editor shares the report with the author but not the letter.



# 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

## Step 2: Referees

### Common Issue:

- Give credit where it is due.
- Reference supervisors, lecturers and original sources.
- Never give negative cites
- Don't plagiarize.
- Badly explained modelling.
- Be clear about the contribution.



## 2. What Happens Behind the Veil?

### Step 3: Editor's Decision

After 3-6 months reports are returned to the editor. She has maybe 6 documents 3 reports and 3 letters. She must now decide whether to

- 1) Conditionally Accept
- 2) Offer a Revise and Resubmit
- 3) Reject



# 3. How to deal with a conditional accept

Celebrate and do what they ask



### 3. How to deal with a revise and resubmit

Read the reports *very* carefully – then walk away and reflect for a week.

Plan how to respond to all comments, if they are inconsistent ask the editor for guidance.

It's *not* usually a good idea to complain.

If the referees didn't understand something – it's your fault!



# 3. How to deal with a reject

Again read the reports very carefully – then walk away and reflect for a week.

Read the comments very carefully.

Treat the process as a learning opportunity – this is now the *only* way you are going to get unbiased feedback on your research.

Don't get disheartened – everyone gets rejected.

It's *not* personal.

Don't wait too long to resubmit elsewhere.

