

A stack of several books with colorful covers in shades of green, blue, yellow, red, and orange, viewed from a low angle.

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learning lab

A network diagram consisting of grey dots of varying sizes connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web of connections.

# Choosing a journal for your manuscript

Tips for selecting a target journal for your academic or research paper

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# Introduction

Finding a good match between your manuscript and a peer-reviewed academic journal is the key to getting published efficiently and effectively. A good match will not only minimize the chances of manuscript rejection, but also maximize the chances that your paper is read and cited.

This booklet provides tips for how to select and shortlist appropriate target journals for your academic paper. Before you start, make sure you know what type of academic paper you have prepared or want to prepare.

It may be a case report, review paper, methodological paper, letter to the editor, or an original research paper, among others.

Also think about the likely readership of your paper, given its main messages and implications.

**How to SELECT A TARGET JOURNAL**

- When to select a journal?**
  - Early in the writing process, to ensure a good fit for your study's topic, importance, and relevance
  - Knowing the journal requirements helps during writing
- Where to select a journal?**
  - Indexes, institutional websites, or the free Edanz Journal Selector ([www.edanzediting.com/JOURNAL-SELECTOR](http://www.edanzediting.com/JOURNAL-SELECTOR))
- How to select a journal?**
  - Match criteria that matter to you with those of journals
  - Check past issues, make shortlist of journals, and order them strategically
- Don't forget!**
  - Choose only journals that are peer reviewed
  - Submit your manuscript to only **one** journal at a time
  - Check the journal is trusted by using the checklists at [thinkchecksubmit.org](http://thinkchecksubmit.org)

**What matters to you?**

Prestige and trust; mark of achievement → **Journal reputation** ↔ High visibility and access to readers who may talk about, share, and cite your work and be future collaborators

Do you have a deadline or want to be the first to publish? → **Speed**

↕

**Reach**

**What matters to journals?**



## Basics of journal selection

### 1. When to select a journal?

You should begin thinking about your target journal early on in the writing process—for example, when you have analyzed your results and made an outline of your key messages. Your initial aim is to find a good fit between the journal and your study in terms of topic, importance, and relevance in your field. Knowing the journal requirements early also helps you during the writing process to keep your manuscript focused on the journal's aims, scope, and readership.

### 2. Where to select a journal?

Your own reading/reference list may give you ideas of possible target journals for your work. You can find target journals by searching online indexes or databases: general ones include Scopus, Web of Science, and the Directory of Open Access Journals; specific ones include [PubMed/Medline](#), [PsycINFO](#), and [Agricola](#). You can also search online libraries of your institution or professional societies. Use your draft text to search the free and secure online **Edanz Journal Selector** (at [www.edanzediting.com/Journal-Selector](https://www.edanzediting.com/Journal-Selector)), where you can find journals that match your topic. You can then find journals' online author guidelines as well as relevant published abstracts.

<https://www.edanz.com/journal-selector>



### 3. How to select a journal?

Now that you have identified some journals that likely match your particular study area and topic, you need to make a shortlist of target journals. First, make a list of the publication criteria that matter to you and then assess whether each journal from your initial search fulfills your criteria. Find past issues of each journal to make sure you are familiar with the type of contents published, and carefully read the information for authors and About Us journal webpages. Also look for key publication statistics on the journal website or in the footnotes of a few past articles of each journal.

Then, keep only the three or four best matching journals, ordering them strategically to fit your aims and timing. For example, if you are trying to publish a medical paper and have time and consider your study to be very important, you could aim for prestigious international general journals, one at a time (e.g., [Nature](#), [Science](#), [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#)).

If your topic is not broadly focused but still has international implications, your shortlist could consist of international unidisciplinary journals (e.g., [Nature Medicine](#), [British Medical Journal](#), [Journal of the American Medical Association](#), [Lancet](#)) or subdisciplinary ones (e.g., [Blood](#), [Circulation](#), [Stroke](#)).

However, if your study is not novel and you are also running out of time, your shortlist could include or consist entirely of online megajournals, which do not consider novelty or potential impact during peer review (general ones include [PLOS ONE](#), [Science Advances](#), and [Scientific Reports](#); field-specific ones for biomedicine include [BMJ Open](#), [PeerJ](#), and [eLife](#)).

### 4. Don't forget!

Choose only journals that are peer reviewed and submit your manuscript to only one journal at a time. Making multiple submissions of the same paper to different journals at the same time is not allowed. Make sure the journal you choose to submit your manuscript to is a trusted one, by using the checklists at the "Think. Check. Submit." website, at [www.thinkchecksubmit.org](http://www.thinkchecksubmit.org).

# What matters most in journal selection?

Match your publication aims with the main features of journals when making your initial list of target journals.

## 1. What matters to you?

- Journal reputation
  - Prestige and reader/public trust in the journal
  - International mark of achievement to publish in the journal
- Audience reach
  - High article visibility and access
  - Reach readers who may talk about, share, and cite your work
  - Reach possible future collaborators (can be wide or narrow readership)
- Publication speed
  - Do you have a deadline coming up?
  - Do you want to be the first to publish particular findings or ideas?

## 2. What matters to journals?

- Journal reputation; known for emphasizing
  - New knowledge
  - High-quality content and language
  - Ethical practice
  - Peer review and production quality
  - *For some:* novelty and high/wide potential impact
- Readership (can be wide or narrow)
  - People reading and citing the journal's contents
  - Can depend on journal type, publication frequency/mode, inclusion in indexes



# Tips for using the Edanz Journal Selector

## 1. Type in the secure text box of the Journal Selector tool

([www.edanzediting.com/Journal-Selector](http://www.edanzediting.com/Journal-Selector)) to find target journals that match your:

- Draft title, keywords, notes, outlines, or abstract
- Field of study
- Preferred publisher
- Journal names or ISSNs (international standard serial numbers)

## 2. Filter your search results by::

- Field of study
- Whether a journal is indexed in Science Citation Index (SCI) or SCI Expanded
- Whether open access options are available
- Publication frequency
- Range of Journal Impact Factors

## 3. Find journals with recent papers similar to yours, and make your shortlist:

- Match your criteria and publishing goals to journal features
- Note that some journals ask if your manuscript has previously been rejected
- Ask for advice from a colleague or an Edanz expert who knows the journals in your field

## MYjournal selector

Search over **28,653** journals and **12,010,643** abstracts to find the journal that's right for you

Abstract / Keyword | Journal Name | Publisher Name | Field of Research

Paste abstract text or enter keywords...

SEARCH



Search & Find



Sort & Filter



Make a Decision



# Factors to consider in journal selection

## 8 factors

1. Aims and scope
2. Readership
3. Article type
4. Peer review
5. Production
6. Publication mode and rights
7. Cost and services
8. Journal reputation

### 1. Aims and scope

- Topics (multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, unidisciplinary, or subdisciplinary)?
- Focus (e.g., theory or practice, basic or applied, laboratory or clinical)?
- Evidence levels or study types (meta-analyses, prospective studies, retrospective studies, quantitative or qualitative studies)?
- Selectivity (% acceptance rate)?
- Are novelty and potential impact important?

### 2. Readership

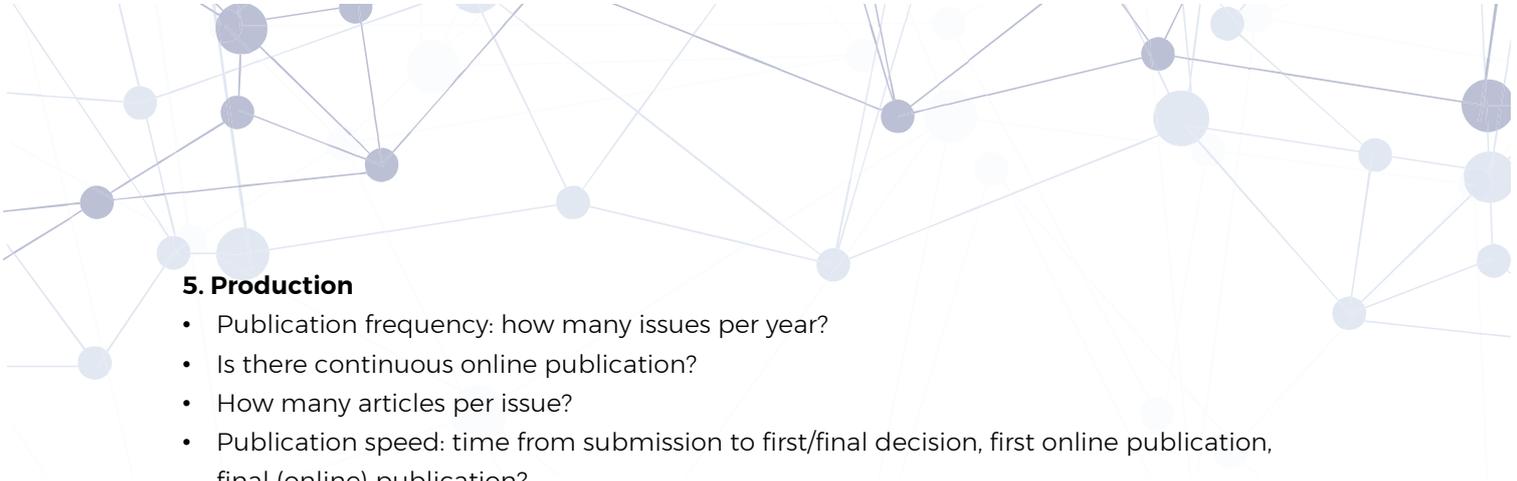
- Depends on Aims & scope (e.g., generalists or specialists; international, regional, or national?)
- Researchers, academics, educators, practitioners, or policy-makers?
- May depend on publication mode (see below)

### 3. Article type

- Which article types are accepted (e.g., some journals accept only reviews or methods papers or short communications), and which are not accepted (e.g., some journals do not accept case reports or reviews)?
- Are there limits on length (word count) or number of illustrations or references?
- Are supplementary files allowed?
- Is prior inclusion of an unsubmitted draft in a preprint server, such as arXiv or bioRxiv, allowed?

### 4. Peer review

- Model of peer review?
  - Before or after publication
  - Closed (single- or double-blind) or open
  - Collaborative (reviewers may discuss with each other, or reviewers/editors may discuss with the authors)
  - Cascading/transferable (manuscript with or without reviews may be passed to another journal in the publishing group or consortium)
  - Portable (a review service organizes peer review before journal submission)
  - Transparent (reviews are published, with or without reviewer names)
- Speed of peer review? Are requests for fast-track review allowed?
- Are presubmission inquiries allowed (thus saving time, and sometimes allowing you to receive advice or journal suggestions from an editorial office)?



## 5. Production

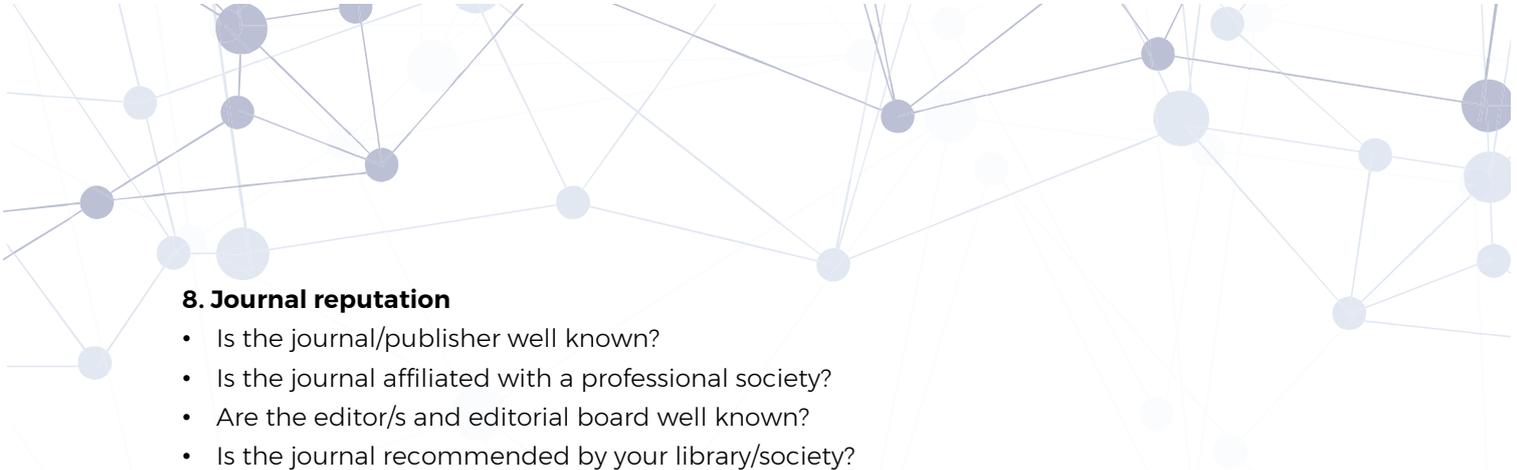
- Publication frequency: how many issues per year?
- Is there continuous online publication?
- How many articles per issue?
- Publication speed: time from submission to first/final decision, first online publication, final (online) publication?

## 6. Publication mode and rights

- Print only, subscription- or membership-based: who is the audience and what is the circulation number?
- Print plus online version, which may be a longer version, with or without
  - Early view (“early online”, “online first”, or “ahead of print”) version
  - Supplementary materials/media and relevant links
  - Links to supplementary materials in an online repository
  - PDF version
- Online only: based on pay-per-view, site license, or subscription?
- Open access:
  - Green open access (free access to preprint or accepted manuscript [final draft] on personal website, institutional website, or nonprofit repository, with or without a time delay before uploading [embargo])?
  - Gold open access (free access to final published version [version of record])?
- Hybrid open access (some content is open access and some is subscription-based; can depend on authors' choice or on journal policy, which may include “delayed open access” after an embargo)?
- Open access available to authors of manuscripts based on studies whose institution or funder mandates open access?
- Author or journal or publisher/owner owns copyright?
- Creative Commons license available?

## 7. Cost and services

- Submission fee, production fee (color/page charges), article-processing charge for open access?
- Editing/illustration service, news release service, marketing, and social media promotion included in publication charge?
- Postpublication commenting and altmetrics (article-level metrics) tracking provided?
- Free batch of reprints or online copies, or (limited) free online access to published article for authors?



## 8. Journal reputation

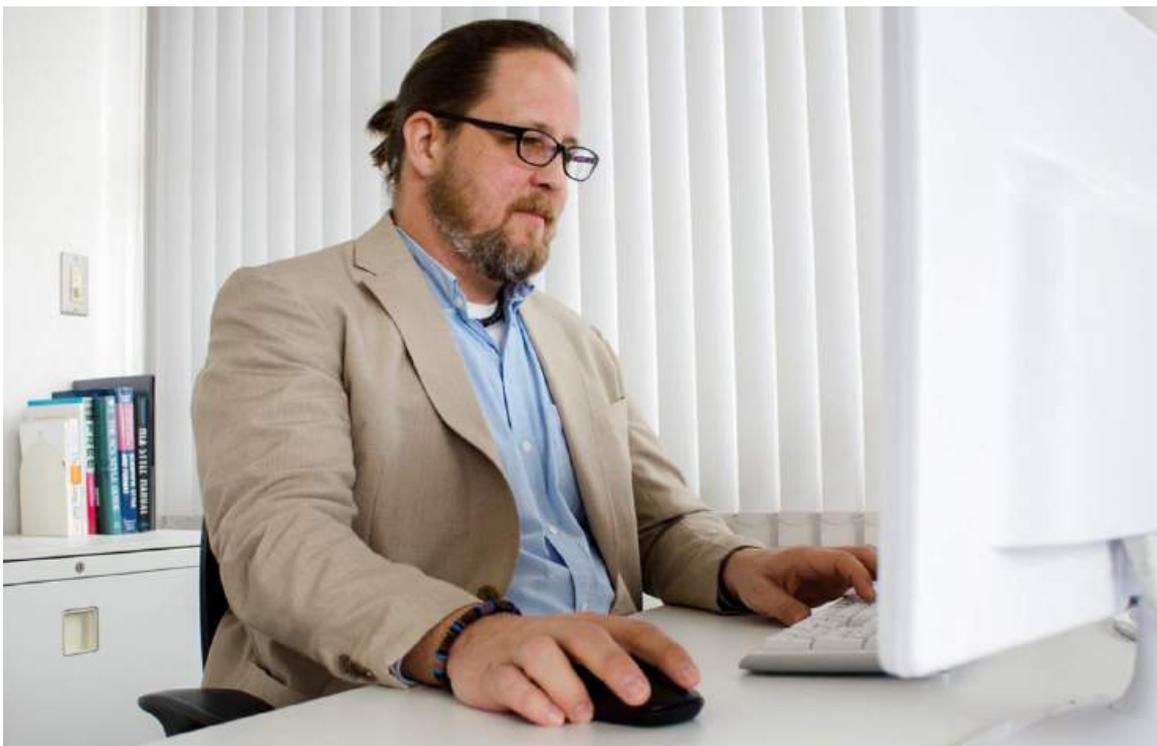
- Is the journal/publisher well known?
- Is the journal affiliated with a professional society?
- Are the editor/s and editorial board well known?
- Is the journal recommended by your library/society?
- Have you or your colleagues read/cited the journal?
- Have your peers or colleagues published in the journal and say they value its peer review process?
- Is the journal known for quality content, language, and production?
- Is the journal included in respected general or specific indexes?
- Does the journal have a long history and a permanent online archive?
- What are the journal's bibliometric scores (e.g., Journal Impact Factor)?



## Conclusion

Knowing what factors to look for when selecting your target journal will help you save time and effort when publishing your next article. Familiarize yourself with different types of journals, understand their aims and procedures, and match journals to your publication aims and paper type. Then, prepare an ordered shortlist of target journals, but submit your paper to only one journal at a time.

When deciding on your target journals, it is important that you objectively consider the strength of evidence and claims made in your paper, and hence the usefulness and likely readership of your work. Ask a native English-speaking colleague or professional editor for a second opinion, and to help turn your excellent research into an excellent paper by checking that you adhere closely to the journal's guidelines and style.



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<https://www.edanz.com/journal-selector>



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for your research and publishing needs

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