

How to “Sell” Your Paper to a Peer-reviewed Journal

Dear Readers,

Once a research project has been completed and the manuscript written, researchers want their paper to be reviewed and then published ASAP. This is very understandable, but unfortunately, the peer-review process usually takes time, much too often even up to 3 months or sometimes even longer. There are many reasons for this.

Journals today are bombarded with manuscripts and finding ‘peers’ to review all these manuscripts is simply often very difficult. On the other hand, peer researchers receive many review requests from different journals, also frequently from open-access journals. Quite often the consulted reviewers decline. We believe that reviewing a paper for a journal is an academic task; every researcher wants to have his or her paper reviewed and published within the shortest possible time, and in return, the researcher helps the journal as a reviewer in the peer-review process. It is also very understandable that consulted reviewers do not accept every review request, since the time needed to provide the journal with a high-quality review should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, reviews are often poorly done, compelling the editorial team to seek new reviewers, which again lengthens the review process. Obviously, the JAD editorial team strives for a very short review time, although this is not always in our power alone.

Nevertheless, it is still not fully understood in the research community that the authors themselves also determine the review time of their paper to a great extent. The overall “attractiveness” of the paper is the determining factor. Authors should “sell” their paper to the potential reviewer and later to the potential reader; the latter is as important as the former, because authors hope that their publications will be cited by readers when authoring their own paper.

With regard to the JAD review process, each new manuscript first passes a quick “pre-review” process. An early rejection should be considered as fair to the authors. Of course this decision should be taken on correct grounds. The authors do not lose much time: they can either amend their paper and re-submit it, or they can decide to submit

their manuscript to another journal. The two chief reasons for not immediately sending the paper to actual review are: insufficient manuscript quality and a paper “light” in content. The JAD encourages authors to carefully prepare their manuscripts. Authors should strictly follow the JAD’s Guidelines for Authors; the most common manuscript-formatting error is that the references are not alphabetically ordered in the reference list. Other reasons are inadequate or even faulty language, abundant typographical errors, figures of insufficient quality, etc. In the best case, the manuscript rejected in pre-review is returned to the authors with the request to revise and re-submit the manuscript to the JAD.

Further, a paper may also not pass the pre-review process if its content is not “attractive” enough, with attractiveness being interpreted in the sense of research quality and originality. Authors should go through their own paper critically, asking themselves whether the data provided and the “research story” written is sufficiently innovative and definitive. Papers should go beyond simple measurement of the bond strength, microleakage, push-out bond strength, etc., that is, all kinds of tests that solely compare the performance of products and/or techniques without much mechanistic research being involved. Obviously, such tests can be included in the paper, but should not be an end unto itself; rather, they should be used in support of other research data.

Be creative and innovative in study design, methodology, and research hypothesis or question. Always use adequate controls and apply complementary research tools to provide hard scientific evidence. Refrain from splitting up data to obtain multiple papers, as this substantially weakens the paper’s impact. In the interest of the author’s science citation index (but also the JAD’s impact factor), research quality is the primary criterion our editorial team employs to judge the publication readiness of a paper.

On behalf of the editorial team, we would like to urgently remind authors to spend sufficient time on preparing their manuscripts. Well-prepared, attractive papers are reviewed faster. It starts with an attractive TITLE, inviting the curious reviewer (and later the reader) to review/read the paper. Preferably, the title should already disclose the major

research finding. It is completely unacceptable to mention product names in the title. Paper series with two or more parts also cannot be considered for review; each paper should stand on its own.

The next important part is the ABSTRACT; this should be written in a very informative way, again to entice the reader to read the full paper. The abstract should only mention the main lines of the research without much methodological detail. Abbreviations are better avoided in the abstract. End the abstract with a clear message summarizing the main finding(s).

In the INTRODUCTION, the research background should be sketched in a brief way; stick to “the point” and do not provide the whole historical background, for instance, of adhesive dentistry. The experimental groups can be abbreviated on the condition that they are self-explanatory; otherwise they will reduce the readability/fluency of the paper if the reviewer/reader always has to search for the explanation of the abbreviations. Always end the Introduction with a clear description of the research hypotheses that were tested.

The most detailed part of the paper is the MATERIALS AND METHODS section. Essentially, one cannot mention too many methodological details. The more details that are provided, the more easily and accurately a study can be replicated. Very important with regard to fluent readability of the paper is to be very consistent in the structure. Throughout the whole manuscript, keep the same order of tests, materials tested, etc. Be sure to provide a clear and logical build-up of the paper. Also avoid using the wording “group(s)” in the sense of “in the ‘x’ group, we found ...”, while in the ‘y’ group, ...”

The “driest” part is the RESULTS section. Here, only the facts without any interpretation need to be described in the same order used in the previous Materials and Methods section. Do not describe the figures in the Results section in sense of “Figure ‘x’ shows that ...”; this should be done in the figure legends. Figures (and tables) are meant to support the main findings and should only be referred to within brackets. Also be aware that figures are always more

attractive than tables, as the reviewer/reader can visually grasp the general findings and immediately interpret the data. Tables are needed as a means to report the study data in full detail and often are the best way to succinctly report the statistics.

Finally, the DISCUSSION section is the part of the paper where the findings can be freely interpreted and related to other research findings in literature. One may speculate in this part of the paper, but always on the basis of thorough literature work and correct citation of previous publications. Much too often the actual data are repeated in the Discussion section.

Each paper should finally be closed with a clear CONCLUSION, preferably including a statement regarding the CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE of the research data gathered.

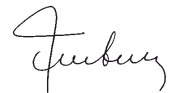
From an organizational standpoint, authors are advised to follow the classical paper style, with the body of the manuscript (with the abovementioned sections) followed first by the reference list (in the correct formatting), the tables (always without vertical lines), the figures and finally the figure legends, in that order. As opposed to already positioning the figures and tables within the body of the manuscript, this facilitates reviewing/proofreading. It should be clear that high-quality figures/photomicrographs will enhance the paper’s attractiveness, but also that the general document formatting should be simple, without elaborate formatting features.

Although for many of you these guidelines may appear very obvious and straightforward, we from the JAD editorial team are confronted almost daily with manuscripts that lack several of the above-mentioned characteristics of a well-prepared manuscript.

REMEMBER THAT AN ATTRACTIVE PAPER IS REVIEWED AND EVENTUALLY PUBLISHED FASTER!



Bart Van Meerbeek



Roland Frankenberger