

# 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



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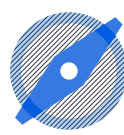
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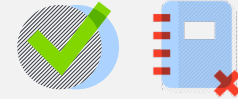
Journal scope



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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:



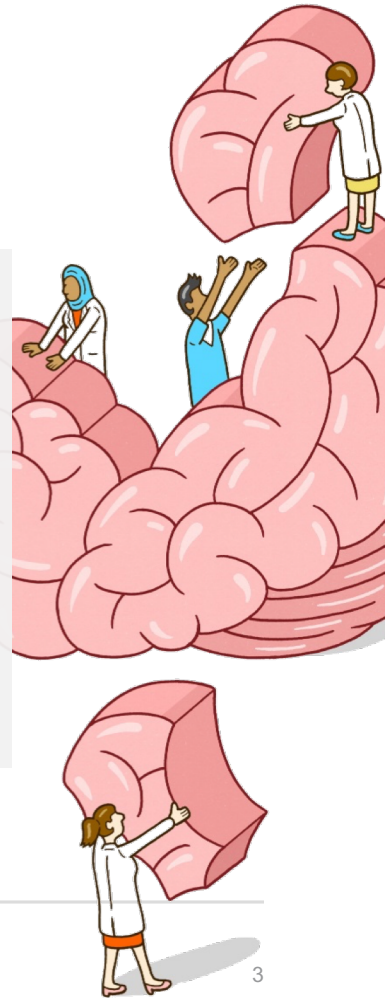
Ask **colleagues and peers** for their recommendations



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

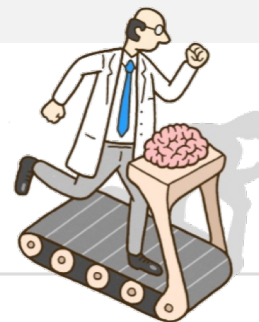
- Search for journals by keywords, title, publisher or category. Select up to three journals to compare side-by-side

## 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

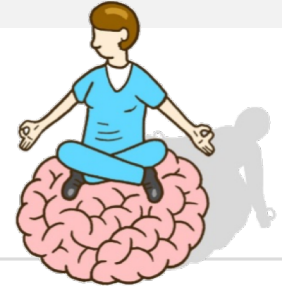
- Uses smart search technology to match the title and abstract of your manuscript to potential Elsevier titles

## 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.



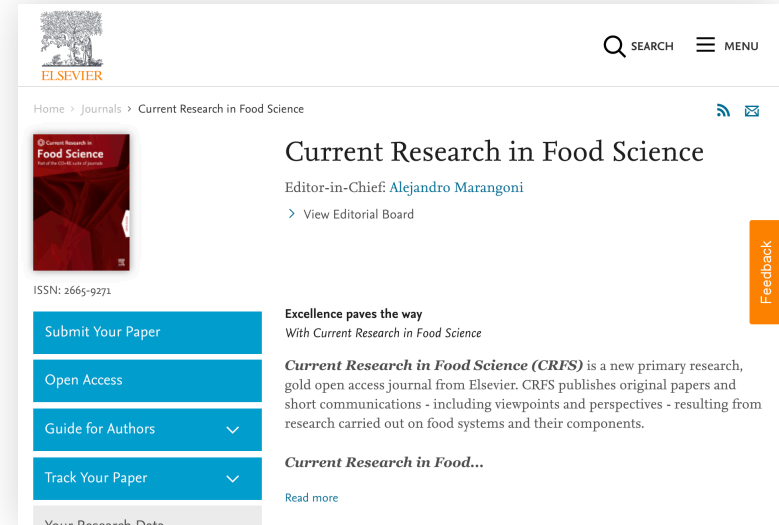
**Don't** submit without checking the journal's aims and scope. A key reason editors immediately reject manuscripts is that the paper is a poor fit for that journal.

# 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. A central image shows the journal cover with the title 'Current Research in Food Science' and the Elsevier logo. Below the cover, the ISSN is listed as 2665-9271. A vertical orange 'Feedback' button is on the right side. The main content area includes a 'Submit Your Paper' button, an 'Open Access' button, a 'Guide for Authors' dropdown menu, and a 'Track Your Paper' dropdown menu. Below these is a 'Your Research Data' section. The journal title 'Current Research in Food Science' is prominently displayed, followed by the Editor-in-Chief's name, Alejandro Marangoni, and a link to 'View Editorial Board'. A featured article snippet is visible, titled 'Excellence paves the way' with the subtitle 'With Current Research in Food Science'. The article description states: 'Current Research in Food Science (CRFS) is a new primary research, gold open access journal from Elsevier. CRFS publishes original papers and short communications - including viewpoints and perspectives - resulting from research carried out on food systems and their components.' A 'Read more' link is provided at the end of the snippet.

# 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 [Altmetrics.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 Steinginga,  
*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. They actively and aggressively solicit submissions often for a fee.
2. The call for paper emails contain spelling and grammar mistakes.
3. They have a short publication history, e.g., four issues or fewer, even though the journal has existed for several years.
4. Their scope is very broad, or the content published doesn't match their stated aims and scope.
5. They offer rapid publication (e.g., within 48 hours).

Publishing in a predatory journal can have negative consequences:

- Your article is not considered validated 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 quality 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, US, it is designed to assess the quality of a journal or publisher.
- **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/>
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- Enago Open Access Journal Finder: <https://www.enago.com/academy/journal-finder/>
- JournalGuide: <https://www.journalguide.com/>
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- Springer Nature journal suggester: <https://journalsuggester.springer.com/>
- Think. Check. Submit: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
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