



University of California
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How to write a manuscript

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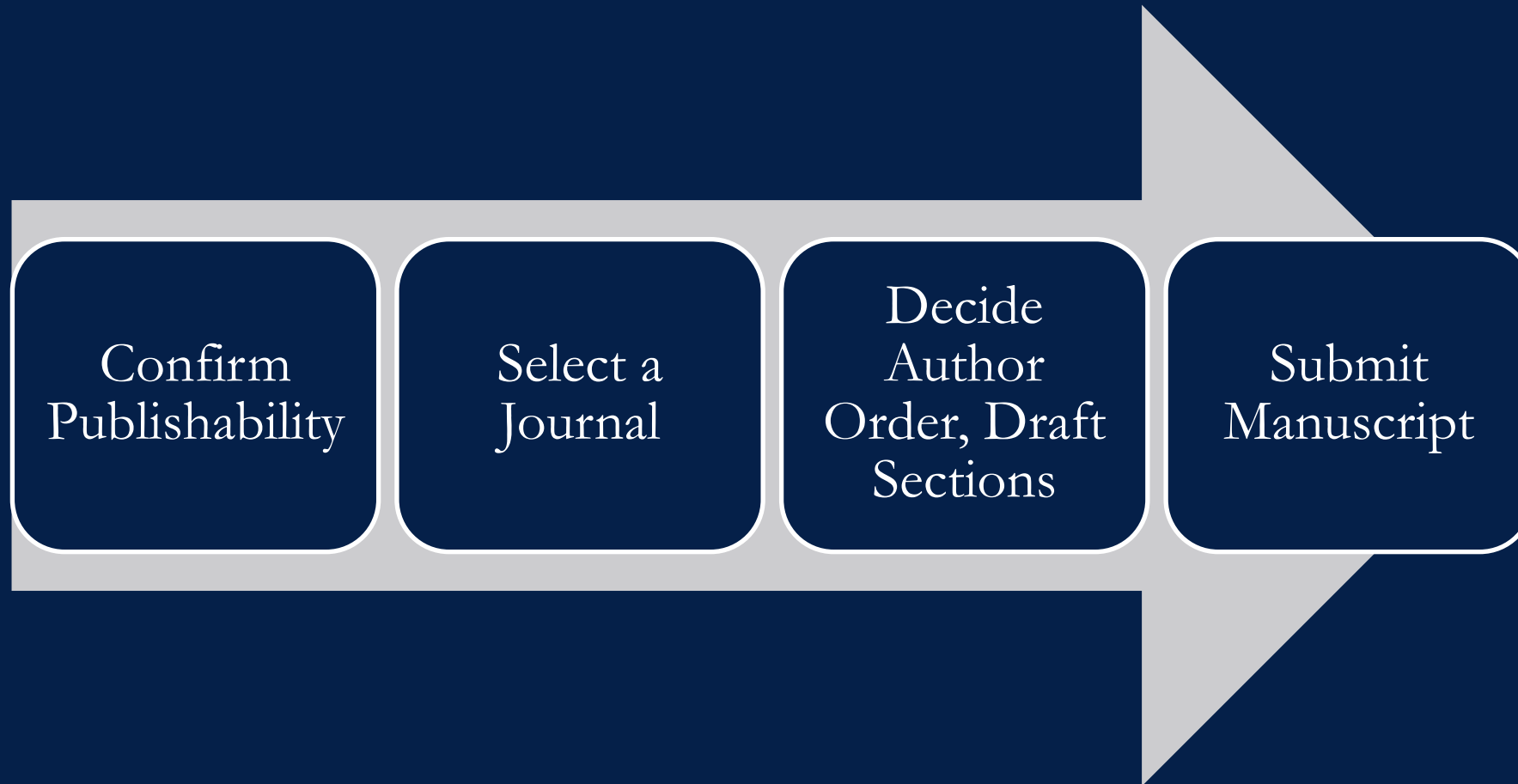
Kaiser Permanente San Jose

ADAPTED From: Lecture created by Miranda Ritterman Weintraub, PhD, MPH July 2018, Scientific Writing How to write a manuscript

Learning Objectives

1. Explore the manuscript writing process
2. Understand how to determine publishability
3. Review Content & Structure

Steps for writing a manuscript



Publishability

SCOPE: The content of the paper must match the scope of the journal.

NOVELTY: It must present novel results (with the exception of review papers).

SIGNIFICANCE: The results must be significant enough to be worth reading (and thus worth publishing).

QUALITY: The quality of the paper (method and execution of the research, as well as the writing) must be sufficiently high

Types of Manuscripts & FIT

Literature Review/Protocol

Original Research

Review Articles

Quality Improvement reports

Case Reports/Case Series

Research briefs

Letter to the Editor/Commentary

Policy and Practice briefs

Book Reviews

Considerations for Selecting a Journal

Audience

Scientific Rigor

Ethics

Open Source

Impact Factor

Journal Fit

Peer Review Process

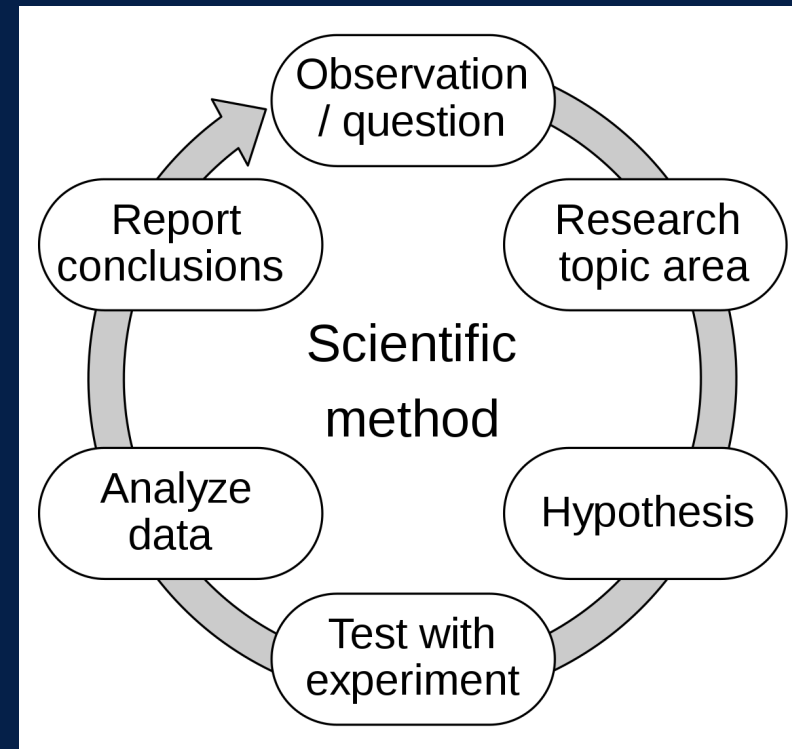
Indexing Status

Authorship

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.



Structure and organization



Standard structure



- Introduction: What was the question?
- **M**ethods: How did you try to answer it?
- **R**esults: What did you find?
- **A**nd
- **D**iscussion: What does it mean?

INTRODUCTION: Content



What is currently known about the topic?

Where is the gap?

Why should the reader care?

What was your research question and hypothesis?

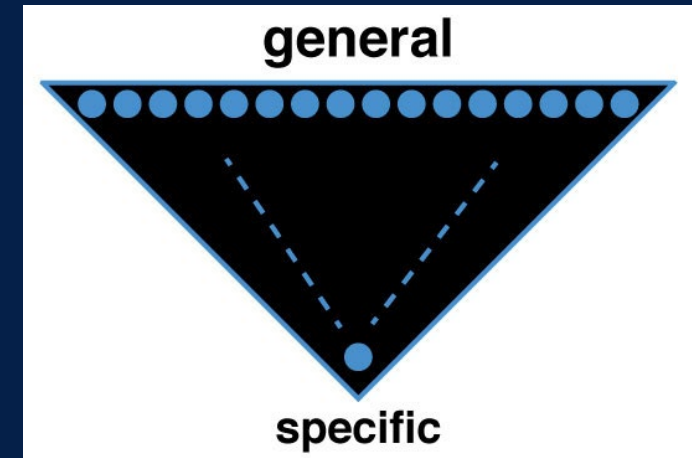
What was the question?

Clearly states:

- Scope
- Novelty
- Significance

Clearly shows:

- Importance of doing the study



Introduction: common pitfalls

Providing unnecessary background information

Exaggerating the importance of the work

Failing to make clear the research questions and hypotheses

Method: content



How did you try to answer the research question?

Describe what was done

Describe how it was done

State it was done with the proper human subjects approvals

Justify the study design

Explain sampling

Explain analysis

Consider figure/diagram to illustrate methods

Method: Common Pitfalls

Including results

Including details not needed to judge validity

Writing a chronological history



What did you find?

Results: Content

Present results that are new

Include statistics, p-values and confidence intervals

Results require little supporting text in the body of the paper b/c they are presented in well-crafted

- Tables
- Graphs
- Figures

Results Common pitfalls

Not following journal format guidelines for results

Interpreting results

Including only significant results

Inconsistency in numbers reported

Reporting meaningless numbers instead report magnitudes or percentages.

Reporting only ns or percentages and not both

Discussion: Content



Goal:

- To explain/interpret the results
- To answer the research questions
- Put it in context with the larger literature

What does it mean?

Structure: Specific-to-general Rule (opposite of introduction)

- How specific results contribute to generalizable knowledge/wider applicability

Content

- Summarize results
- Discuss if results are expected or unexpected
- Compare results to previous work
- Interpret/explain the results
- Hypothesize about their generalizability
- Discuss limitations and how influence interpretation of results
- Provide conclusion

Discussion: Common Pitfalls

Overstating impact or significance of the results

Lack of organization including in chronological order rather than logical order

Does not relate to any of the results

Ignores results that do not support the conclusions

Draws conclusions from results without logical arguments to back them up

Manuscript title

Clear to reader without having to read paper

Specific rather than general

“Childhood Obesity in America”

vs.

“A Retrospective Cohort Study of Trends in Body Mass Index among Third Grade Children from Three States in the US between 2004 and 2010”





“Once the authors are ready to begin the writing process, write “Fast, Bad, and wRong” (FBR).

The hallmarks of this process are an intentional focus on writing in phases that helps the author to focus his or her energies on a particular aspect of the writing process in a non-judgmental and optimistic manner.”

- Hammond and Rech 2020 page 819

Citation Considerations

- It gives proper credit to the authors of the words or ideas that you incorporated into your paper.
- It allows those who are reading your work to locate your sources, in order to learn more about the ideas that you include in your paper.
- Citing your sources consistently and accurately helps you avoid committing plagiarism in your writing.
- Pick a style consistent with Journal requirements and stick with it throughout the paper.

Citations: Quoting

Quote if

- The author's words are particularly brilliant, witty, edgy, distinctive.
- You are using an authoritative source to back up your point.
- You are analyzing diction, tone, or a writer's use of a specific word or phrase.

Avoid

- “Plop quotations” that are dropped into your paper without any introduction, discussion, or follow-up.
 - *Use most important fragment and weave it into a sentence.*
- Quotations to tell your story for you.

Citations: Be Specific with Evidence

- Youth violence has successfully been reduced by school-based efforts to promote healthy and non-violent relationships (Johnson, 2011).
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), programming that integrates social development theories with age-appropriate strategies have been successful in teaching youth how to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence (2013).

CITATIONS: COMMON PITFALLS

- Not citing others' work is plagiarism
- Failure to cite influential papers
- Failure to critically evaluate cited papers
- Citing irrelevant or trivial references
- Depending too much on secondary sources



Manuscript submission

Select right journal

Follow specific author guidelines of journal

Include:

- Abstract
- Cover letter
- Title page with co-authors and their affiliations and contact info
- Tables/Figures/Graphs
- References
- Disclosures
- Acknowledgements

Peer-review Process

Administrative Review

Peer-Review

Revise resubmit

Proofs (final edits)

Publish

Structure Suggestions

- Follow required headings/layout of journal
- Use subheadings to organize within sections.
- Use the same key terms throughout.
- Define your acronyms
- Don't use too many prepositional phrases at the beginning of sentences.
- Use superlatives sparingly or not at all.
 - ***Don't ever use the word very.***
- Don't begin a sentence with a naked number, percentage or fraction.

