

UC Santa Cruz

Publishing Tips Series Season 1

Title

Season 1, Week 2 - How should I choose a journal for my research? Is this a good journal?

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Publishing Tips Series – Season 1, Week 2

October 31, 2024

This is the second week of the Publishing Tips Series, Season 1, running from October 24 to December 5, 2024. This series addresses frequently asked questions on publishing from graduate students. This week's installment covers "**How should I choose a journal for my research? Is this a good journal?**" Here are this week's takeaways:

- Methods for finding possible journals where you may submit your manuscript include searching via your connections with people and organizations and through your research itself.
- Several factors help discern whether a journal is a good venue for your research.

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[Season 1, Week 2 podcast episode](#) (same content as the following text-based version, only in audio format)

How should I choose a journal for my research? Is this a good journal?

Selecting a journal is an important part of the publication process because many papers are rejected for being misaligned with the journal's aims and scope. In other words, since each journal focuses on specific topics, it is up to you as the author to identify a journal that publishes on subjects that encompass your research.

Scope is not the only way to choose a journal. Selecting a journal to which to submit your article hinges on many factors. The most obvious factor is whether the journal's topical focus aligns with your research (i.e., scope). Other factors that may help you discern if a journal is a good venue for your work will be covered today after we talk about how to find journals in the first place.

How do I find possible journals?

Students and new authors often wish that there are lists of good journals in their fields so that they can browse potential journals. However, your research can vary greatly, and there are thousands of journals, so it is up to you as the researcher and author to find the best home for your article based on factors that are important to your work and self.

One way to find potential journals is through people and organizations. You may ask your advisors and peers where they have published and what their experience with that journal was. You may also look at professional organizations and societies in your field to see if they have a journal that publishes on your topic. Listservs in your field may contain announcements of journal issues and/or calls for proposals for articles, chapters, special issues, and/or conference proceedings to which you could consider submitting.

Another way to find journals that may be good venues for your research is through your research itself. Where is the article you are reading published? If you have already started writing, what journals are in your citations in your manuscript? Who has also cited the paper you are citing? You can see these citations at the end of articles or in databases, like Google Scholar or Web of Science – reach out to the Library if you have citation questions.

You may also browse resources like the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) (DOAJ) and [Web of Science](#) to search for journals that publish on your topic. Reach out to the Library if you have questions about using these resources, such as finding whether your journal has a journal impact factor and what it is through Web of Science. Another useful resource, [Think. Check. Submit.](#), supplies a checklist to evaluate whether the journal you are considering is trustworthy.

What considerations are there for picking a journal?

Once you identify some potential journals, you can explore the following aspects of those journals further:

Audience is one factor for whether a particular journal is the place where you want your work to be published. Ask these questions: Does this journal reach the people who care about your research? Is your research interdisciplinary? If your research is interdisciplinary, do you want to reach your primary audience in a discipline-specific journal or would you rather publish in an interdisciplinary journal to reach a broader readership? The journal is not the only way to share your work, though; other venues like conferences and social media provide ways to share.

Another consideration for choosing a journal is the **way that a journal makes articles available to readers**. In other words, is the journal open access or traditional behind a paywall charging a fee to read? The publishing landscape is increasingly open access so more publications are openly available to read freely online. There are several ways, including open access, that publishers make content available. In the case of journals, they may publish their articles traditionally meaning behind a paywall, open access meaning free with no paywall, or hybrid so that an author has the choice of whether their article will be open or closed. Even if

you publish behind a paywall, the UC Open Access Policies allow you to share the accepted manuscript openly in a repository. (*We will talk about open access publishing options at UCSC in a future week!*)

Prestige – It would be remiss not to mention prestige as a factor for selecting a journal because it carries influence in publishing. Some journals are high impact, while other journals less so, based on metrics, but metrics are only one measure of importance. Metrics like the [journal impact factor](#) are one indicator of prestige, and another indicator is a journal's prominence in your field, such as how many colleagues read and talk about it. Most fields have one or more journals that are deemed premier. Weighing a journal's prestige also ties into what audience you would like to reach because the top journals draw more readers, so you may reflect on which part(s) of your research would fit in a top-tier journal and which aspects that you may publish in a less prestigious but still rigorous and reputable journal. Ultimately, you may gauge what is most important to you as an author for the journal that you publish in, and prestige may or may not be the most important factor.

What if this journal rejects my article?

Next week, the Publishing Tips Series will cover decision points in the publishing process. For now, in brief, if the journal rejects an article, the author may submit their article to another journal. It is best to have a backup journal or two in case of rejection so that you can send it to a new journal right away, considering how long it takes for an article to be published. You may need to edit your article to fit the style and/or topic of the next journal before submitting it there. Recall last week's tips on how it is considered unethical to submit to more than one journal at a time, though, so you have to wait for a rejection or withdraw your article before submitting elsewhere.

Tips on selecting a journal

- Read articles in journals that seem like they might be a good place for your work. Does your research relate? Also, notice the tone, formatting, and sections in those articles so that you can write or edit your article to fit that journal's style and also fit your article in one of the journal's existing categories of article types.
- Make sure that the journal is not offering an exceptionally quick turnaround for peer review and/or publication. Promises of fast review or quick publication are a red flag. As we talked about last week, peer review and the whole publishing process are lengthy.
- If a journal invites you to submit, also make sure to research it thoroughly before committing. Talk with your advisor and colleagues about this journal, whether they have gotten similar requests, and whether they and you think it is a legitimate invitation.
- Have a back-up journal or two. If your first choice journal declines your article (which is not uncommon!), you will then already have a place in mind for where to submit next. Since you are already researching journals, you may rank two or three journals as

possible homes for your article. Hopefully you won't need these back-up journals, but this list will be useful if you do need to re-submit elsewhere.

- When you are in the process of selecting a journal, check whether the journal charges an open access fee or article processing charge (APC). Authors are responsible for finding a way to pay for the APC for their article, but UCSC has funding support for certain publishers, so you may check whether the open access fee for your journal of interest is discounted, partially funded, multipayer (i.e., partially funded by UCSC and the author both), or fully funded under our terms with the publisher. It is best to determine this early on in the publishing process so that you know what to expect. *(In a future week, the Publishing Tips Series will discuss how to find whether a journal is covered with open access support for UCSC authors.)*

Putting it into practice

1. Chat with your advisor and fellow students/candidates in your program and ask: *Where are they publishing their research and scholarship? How are they selecting a journal? What journals do they recommend submitting your research to?* Their answers may provide inspiration for journals to consider for your own research.
2. On a very practical level, check out the submission requirements of the journal. *Does your research fit into one of their article types? What citation style and formatting are required?* The answers to these questions will help inform whether you choose this journal, too.
3. See if the journal accepts queries for possible articles. If so, send a message to the journal – often the Managing Editor is the person to contact – and ask whether your research aligns with their journal and whether they will consider your article. If the journal replies that they will not consider the article, you may also ask the editor to suggest alternative journals.

More questions? Contact the Library at research@library.ucsc.edu or [sign up](#) for a one-on-one Zoom meeting about publishing.

Talk with you next week about the decision points in the publishing process!

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