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Publishing Tips Series Season 2

Title

Season 2, Week 5 - What are my options if my article is rejected?

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1248p573>

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Publication Date

2025-11-20

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Publishing Tips Series – Season 2, Week 5

November 20, 2025

This is the fifth week of the Publishing Tips Series, Season 2, and this second season runs from October 23 to December 4, 2025. This week's installment covers **"What are my options if my article is rejected?"** Here are this week's takeaways:

- Rejection feels harsh, but most authors go through it. You are not alone.
- If your article is rejected, there are steps you can take to try again, such as using the peer review feedback to revise your article before resubmitting to another journal.

Some of you asked about rejection when you signed up for this series so read on for more about what to do when reviewers give feedback that does not align with your goals for your article.

Spotify link to listen

[Season 2, Week 5 podcast episode](#) (same content as the following text-based version, only in audio format)

What are my options if my article is rejected?

A student wrote on the Library's survey of graduate students on publishing:

"I missed an opportunity to publish an article because I was unclear of the process from submission to publication. I received editorial feedback before peer review and didn't understand it to be a partial acceptance, rather I took it as a rejection."

That outcome was effectively a rejection for this author, unfortunately, because they thought their article was being rejected, even though they could have made revisions and re-submitted their manuscript for consideration.

Still, it serves as a learning moment during the sometimes opaque publishing process. If you know the standard steps in the process, you can know what to expect and how to interpret what the journal communicates to you (see [week/episode 3 of Season 1](#) for more on decision points in publishing).

Also, not all is lost! When an article is rejected (and make sure it is rejected and no longer under consideration by the journal), authors may then submit their manuscript to another journal. Read on to learn more about what an article rejection looks like and what you can do about it:

Article rejection

Article rejection means that the journal is no longer considering your article for publication, and they have communicated this decision to you, usually by email and possibly also indicated in the author portal if you log in. Why are articles rejected? Common reasons include a desk rejection because the article does not align with the journal's scope or adhere to the manuscript requirements. Articles are also rejected after peer review when the reviewers and/or editor recommend rejection.

But... the language is pretty harsh! While the term has negative connotations, it simply means that the journal will not publish your article and that you have the chance to try again elsewhere. Rejection never feels good, though, so if you as an author are rejected, take a break to process your feelings and practice self care. Also, your advisor, committee members, and peers have surely experienced a manuscript being rejected, too. Ask most academics, and you can talk with them about what happened and hear how they have handled their articles' rejections.

Reviewers' feedback

Once you feel ready to get back to it, have a look at the journal's feedback on your manuscript or ask them for feedback if none was provided. Even though any revisions you make post-rejection won't be considered by the original journal you submitted to, **you may still consider making edits based on the peer review comments to avoid the same outcome before submitting to another journal.** The reviewers and editors' feedback is worth incorporating to strengthen your manuscript because they provide useful insight into the reader's experience of your article. To do so, reflect on your vision for the article (and, if you have co-authors, that of your team). As you weigh the reviewers' comments, determine if they align with this vision and/or will make reading your results more clear for readers. If so, update your manuscript before re-submitting elsewhere. Alternatively, though often editorial decisions are final, some journals have an appeal process for article rejections. You may check if your journal has an appeal process, such as the [Journal of Computational Physics](#) has, especially if you do not agree with the reviewers' feedback, and take care to follow the appeal requirements closely.

By the way, one of you asked about this when you signed up for this series: **you might receive peer review feedback that you do not think is fair.** Sometimes reviewers give comments that would require drastic changes and a lot of additional work, such as a suggestion for a

completely different study design. Such comments may not be helpful when the study has already been designed, completed, and written up. Alternatively, sometimes comments from reviewers make it seem like they missed the point of your article. You as the author may take all of this in stride because some feedback may not be realistic to incorporate. There is also a way to acknowledge this feedback by adding to your article why you made the choice that you did or telling the editor if it doesn't make sense to say so within your manuscript. Examples are difficult without having a specific situation, but you may talk with your advisor and colleagues about how to address certain feedback, too.

Resubmission

Next, look for another journal where you may submit. Your choice of a new journal will be really situation-dependent! Here are some ways to approach finding a new journal:

- Did you submit to a really prestigious journal and get rejected? You might consider finding a less competitive journal, especially if it is your first article so that there is less pressure.
- Did the reviewers' and editors' feedback say anything about the fit for the journal? Consider that feedback when looking for a new venue and evaluating whether the scope of the new journal would better cover your paper.
- Are your research methods or your area of focus interdisciplinary? Look over the research the journals in your areas are publishing and analyze if it is similar to your work. If so, that may be a good journal.
- Do your advisor, committee members, and peers or labmates have suggestions? Examine the journals they suggest as options.
- Did the journal where you originally submitted suggest other journals, or will the editor pass along your manuscript to another journal in the publisher's portfolio? Take a close look at those journal(s) by seeing what the scope statements are, what articles those journals have published recently, who is publishing there, etc.
- Are there any calls for papers in special issues that your article would relate to? Usually editors of special issues need articles to complete the issue, so if your research aligns and your article is already written, it can be a win-win.

These ideas are only a few ways to find another journal to try again! You may also revisit [week/episode 2 of Season 1](#) for more on finding a journal.

When you find another journal, you may have to revise your manuscript according to this new-to-you journal's manuscript preparation guidelines since you had previously prepared it for the previous journal. Maybe the preferred citation style is different or the required research article sections differ. The length, abstract, accessibility requirements, and figure guidelines may also vary. Whatever the differences are, pay attention to them to avoid a desk rejection or

adding even more time to the already long publishing process for something relatively minor (see [week/episode 1 of Season 1](#) for more on how long it takes to get published).

All the work that you do after a rejection – closely checking out potential new journals, reworking your manuscript according to reviewer feedback, and aligning with a new journal's manuscript formatting requirements – will hopefully help your manuscript be a strong candidate for the next journal.

Putting it into practice

Each week we will have a few things to read or try. For this week:

1. Upon rejection, take some time for self care, whether that looks like walking away from email for a bit, doing something that you enjoy, spending time with friends, or something else.
2. Don't sit with the rejection alone. Talk with your peers, advisor, committee members, and/or [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) to process it.
3. Don't give up! You already put a lot of work into your manuscript, so trying again with another journal is usually a worthwhile use of time.

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

Follow along next week for Season 2's last installment on developing your very own publishing plan.

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