

Manuscript Submission

Once you complete your manuscript and celebrate that achievement, turn to the submission process. If you were clear on where you would submit from the onset, you will already have reviewed the publisher's submission criteria. Even so, return to the site and confirm that nothing has changed.

Most journal publishers maintain an online submission site where the manuscript is uploaded in various pieces. Study the instructions carefully before starting, as they can be confusing for the first-time author. There should be contact in case you encounter problems; don't hesitate to ask if you have problems or questions. The following bullets are examples of the separate pieces you may need to upload. The site will also inform you of the format and file type expected for each.

- Title page
- Abstract
- Key words
- Body
- References
- Tables
- Figures

As most are familiar with the other components being submitted, guidance on the abstract and keywords, as well as the necessary agreements, is briefly described below.

Abstract

The abstract is usually the last thing you write and the first thing the reader sees. It must be succinct and within the journal's specified format and length. Because the abstract is also what search engines "see", you should use brief phrases readers are likely to search for. Study the abstracts of other articles to get a sense of how to condense this. The abstract may be limited to 250 words (no abbreviations), of which only the first 40-50 words will be accessed by databases. Be sure to use the word count wisely so that readers will find your abstract.

Keywords

During submission, you will either add your own keywords relative to your manuscript or select them from a list. It can be difficult to come up with the required number of keywords but think broadly about your topic. Keywords cover a lot of ground and can include the patient group, setting, target audience, and type of manuscript (review, brief report, research). You'll want to also include your keywords in your abstract, to promote visibility to search engines.

Submission Agreements

In addition to uploading your manuscript body and other pieces, the submission involves various agreements with the publisher. This will include granting rights to print and distribute the article as well as transferring “ownership” and copyright to the publisher. In copyright transfer, publishers make exceptions on request for your retention for pieces such as unique models, concepts, algorithm, chart, and survey instruments. You should contact the publisher if you want to retain copyright of any aspect of the manuscript. You must also guarantee that the manuscript is your original work and that you have obtained and submitted any necessary permission. You must also attest that you have not submitted the manuscript elsewhere.

Overall Content

Depending on the journal, the submission process will vary slightly. Be sure to confirm you are using the proper reference and manuscript style (APA, etc). Confirm your word count and number of references are within limitation. If not, try to reduce the count and/or contact the editor for guidance. If the submission program requires by-line numbering, use your word processing program to sequentially number each line of your manuscript. This numbering will be used by reviewers as they make comments, as needed. It will be helpful for you to identify issues. Take time to identify the contributions made by each person recognized as author.

There are several steps to navigate in submitting your manuscript. Admittedly, the first time you submit to a specific journal’s system, it is a learning system. There are contacts available for questions. If you have a colleague who has submitted to the same system before, ask for their assistance.