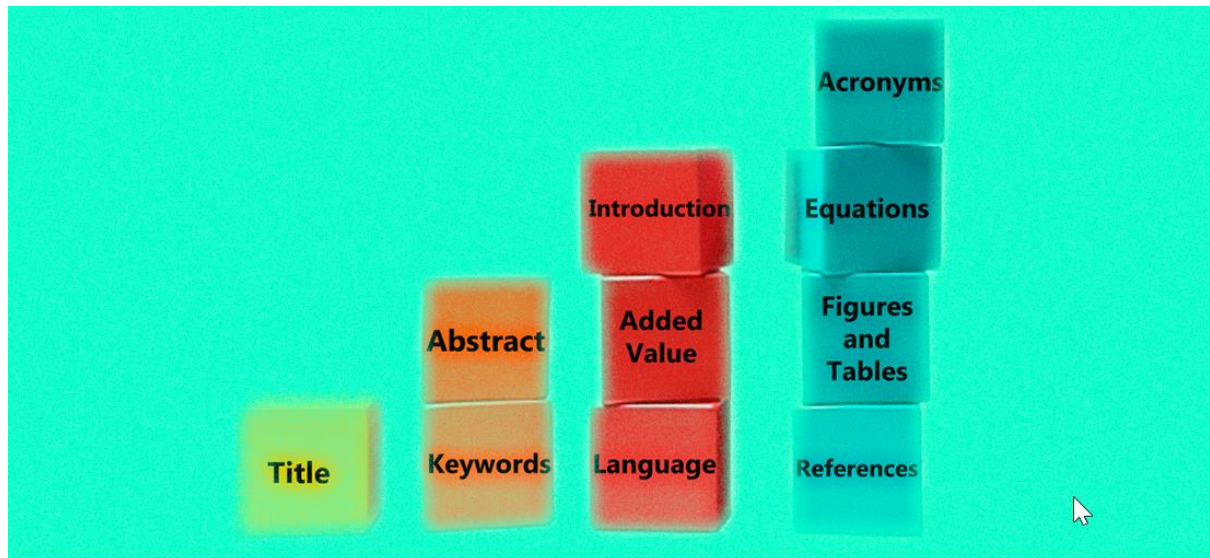


Ten Lessons About Writing Journal Papers Your Mother Never Taught You

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Writing journal papers is as much an art as a science. Every artist needs a little science, and every scientist needs a little artistry. You need a bit of both when writing a journal paper. Many editors and reviewers make up their minds after a few minutes of browsing your paper. Don't bury your contribution like a needle in a haystack. State your points early, bring up your results fast, and highlight your findings quickly. Keep in mind form is just as important as substance. Don't give the editor any reason to desk-reject your manuscript. Most journals have guidelines for authors. Read them carefully and thoroughly to avoid your paper getting sent back to you. Follow these ten general tips to prevent desk rejection:

1. **Added Value:** Introduce a unique point of view to stand out. You can build on an existing concept, but you still need to say something new.
2. **Language:** Simplify your writing style and avoid spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Write short sentences and paragraphs, use the active voice, and don't repeat yourself.
3. **Acronyms:** Expand an acronym once in the abstract and upon the first use in the body of your manuscript only if it appears three times or more. The expansion is not necessary if the acronym is well established in the field (e.g., IT for Information Technology). Remember, acronym overuse reduces readability.
4. **Title:** Make it as concise as possible (maximum 20 words) with no acronyms.
5. **Abstract:** Write it as one paragraph with 150-250 words. Avoid equations and mathematical notations. Minimize acronyms. Only use a reference if the paper

is an extension, rebuttal, or counterpoint to a cited reference. Stick to the point and make that point powerfully. Tell the reader what your research is about, what methods you used, and what you found.

6. **Keywords:** Use four to six keywords. Keywords should be specific and singular.
7. **Introduction:** Hone your first sentence, begin with generalities, gradually narrow your focus, and make sure to highlight your contribution.
8. **Equations:** Number the equations consecutively in parentheses. Refer to them only by numbers in the text—e.g., “as seen in (5)” —except for when the equation number begins a sentence, such as “Equation (5) shows.”
9. **Figures and Tables:** Make figures and tables self-explanatory. Meaningful captions should be placed directly below a figure and above a table. Use high-quality figures with good resolution.
10. **References:** A good rule of thumb is to include twice as many references as pages in your manuscript. For example, A 25-page paper should cite around 50 references. Refer to academic journals and always go back to the original source. References should be reliable, relevant, and current.

A winning formula for a paper is simple writing, streamlined organization, stunning presentation, and solid contribution. Understand that most papers are rejected; feel no shame. Albert Einstein only had one anonymous peer review in his life, and that paper was rejected. Rejection does not mean your work is not good. Publishing journal papers is not easy, and the competition is fierce. To get published, you have to improve your writing skills. To improve your writing skills, you need to write more often. So, start writing.

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