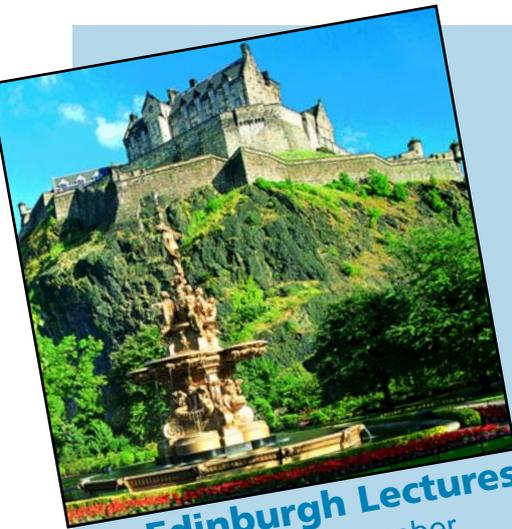




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# How to get published

BY GLENN WILLIAMS

**H**AVE you ever wondered whether you could convert your ideas into a published journal article? Are you uncertain how to start? Or unclear about whether your work has that 'magic ingredient'? Contrary to popular belief, getting your work published is not as hard as it seems, and the sooner you start the better. Try these questions and answers to see if you have what it takes to break into the publishing world...

**Is publishing worth it?** Without a doubt, publishing your work in an academic journal can be highly rewarding. You are developing transferable skills that are relevant when applying for a job or a course of further study. By publishing, you will demonstrate the ability to effectively manage your time, express fluent and coherent thoughts in writing, and adopt a patient but determined approach. You will also show the potential to bring funding to the department by conducting and disseminating research.

## How difficult is it to get published?

Journal publishing is very competitive. Other students, researchers, academics and practitioners are vying for the approval of the editor and peer reviewers. Perhaps the hardest part is coming up with a fresh perspective to make them take notice.

**How do I start?** Firstly, look through the work that you have done for your course, your PhD, even your undergraduate dissertation. Talk to your supervisor so that you don't waste time writing something that stands little chance of publication. Talk to critical friends; they will be peers or other tutors who ask tough questions about your work like 'How do you know that your work is worthy of publication?', 'How do you know you have come up with something new?' and 'What is the main message in your paper?' It is helpful to talk to someone who has had experience of publishing in academic journals to get their perspective on the prospects of publishing your work.

Secondly, look at some of the journals that you have used when doing this work.

Does there seem to be an ongoing debate in them? How can you continue this dialogue? The American Psychological Association's 'Journals in Psychology' resource gives a useful overview of many journals indexed alphabetically and by field, topic and rejection rate, although some of the information soon becomes dated. The best ploy is to also check the web pages of some of your target journals to get more up-to-date information.

Thirdly, make a list of journals that could be target publications for your work. You can only submit your work to one journal at a time, but if one journal rejects your manuscript you can always send it to the next one on your list. Try to ensure that you address some of the criticisms by the editor/peer reviewers if your manuscript is rejected as you may face similar criticisms when sending it to another journal.

Finally, get writing!

## How do I keep the momentum in writing?

Consider why you want to get your work published. Is it to boost your CV or are the pleasures more intrinsic? Do you want to contribute to knowledge, influence changes in practice or merely persuade others to your point of view? Being clear on your motives and what pleasures or benefits you're going to get from publishing should help when a manuscript gets returned with plenty of 'red pen' comments from the peer reviewers!

**What things could reduce my publishing chances?** There are several pitfalls that you need to avoid in transforming your course work into a publication.

- 'Copying and pasting' from your dissertation into an article. This tactic rarely works, particularly as you will be restricted to fewer words and will need to be a lot more focused.
- Choosing the wrong journal. The worst thing that you can do is send in a literature review paper if the journal doesn't publish such articles, or send in

a critique of, say, a particular therapy if the journal's philosophy is the promotion of that therapy. Read the journal's mission statement and look at the types of articles published in it to avoid this kind of error.

- Being unclear about the message that you want to convey and not telling a coherent story. If you aren't clear why readers should care about your message, how clear will the editor, peer reviewers or readers be?

## How can I maximise my publishing chances?

To be a good writer, it helps to be an effective reader. Read different journals and books to learn more about what journals are considered as the best in your field. It will also help to learn how to critique some of the articles that have been published in these journals – what has made these articles so special? If you can't identify the features of an excellent article, you may have the same problem in knowing how to critique your own paper. To be an effective writer, try to adopt the four 'Rs' – writing, reading, reflecting, and rewriting. With determination, patience and a lot of practice in the four 'Rs', the pleasures of being published could be yours for the taking.

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