

Authors' Checklist for Evaluating Journals

The journal publishing landscape continues to evolve rapidly. Journals are primarily available online, many more journals exist now than in the recent past, and the business models by which journals support themselves and/or generate profits have changed as well. As a scholarly author, you may find the choices overwhelming and the quality highly variable. This checklist is intended as a guide to help you determine if a journal you are considering for publication (or editorship) is of high quality. Additional copies are available online from the Scholarly Communication Guide: <http://bit.ly/1V6RoW6>.

Characteristic	Description	Yes?	No?
➤ First impressions	Is the journal's website easy to navigate, free of typos, poor formatting, and broken graphics?		
➤ "About" section	Look for "About" and other information sections. Is the stated purpose of the journal a good match for your work? Does it say how long the publication process takes? Is the peer review process robust?		
➤ Content	Look at a few articles from different issues. Are these articles you would cite? Do the topics of the articles match the journal's stated subject area?		
➤ Indexing	Do you recognize the indexes listed on the journal site? If you don't, find out what they are.		
➤ Editors	Are the editors qualified? If you have been invited to join the editorial board, considering contacting a couple current editors to ask their thoughts on the journal.		
➤ Metrics	Does the journal accurately display its Impact Factor (IF) and other metrics? If the IF is a critical aspect of your evaluation, use <i>Journal Citation Reports</i> to accurately determine the IF. If a journal displays other metrics, find out what they mean since there are both legitimate and questionable alternatives to the IF. Not all quality journals will have an IF. Remember that IF refers to the journal as a whole, not individual papers in the journal.		
➤ Author Rights	Does the journal allow you to retain copyright or at least some rights to your work? For anyone that wants to post their work online, reuse, and authorize others to use their work, this will matter. Look for "copyright transfer" or licensing information to find out what will be required of you.		
➤ Altmetrics and other features	Does the journal offer added value? Alternative metrics (altmetrics) can provide evidence of impact beyond citations such as coverage in news outlets, social media interest, and downloads. Other features may include related article suggestions, smart PDFs with clickable links and citations, easily sharable links to articles, and assistance with compliance with funding mandates to share work openly.		
➤ Open Access costs	Is the cost charged to the author for open access reasonable and easy to find on the journal's webpage? Author costs should not be difficult to find.		
➤ Open Access quality	Is the journal indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (https://doaj.org/)? Does the journal meet the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association's Membership Criteria (http://oaspa.org/membership/)? Even if the publisher is not a member, the criteria can still be used to evaluate the journal.		