

# World Journal of *Gastroenterology*

*World J Gastroenterol* 2023 June 7; 29(21): 3222-3384



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**ACADEMIC WRITING**

- 3379** How to select a journal for your research

*Ramia JM*

**ABOUT COVER**

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**AIMS AND SCOPE**

The primary aim of *World Journal of Gastroenterology* (WJG, *World J Gastroenterol*) is to provide scholars and readers from various fields of gastroenterology and hepatology with a platform to publish high-quality basic and clinical research articles and communicate their research findings online. WJG mainly publishes articles reporting research results and findings obtained in the field of gastroenterology and hepatology and covering a wide range of topics including gastroenterology, hepatology, gastrointestinal endoscopy, gastrointestinal surgery, gastrointestinal oncology, and pediatric gastroenterology.

**INDEXING/ABSTRACTING**

The WJG is now abstracted and indexed in Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE, also known as SciSearch®), Current Contents/Clinical Medicine, Journal Citation Reports, Index Medicus, MEDLINE, PubMed, PubMed Central, Scopus, Reference Citation Analysis, China National Knowledge Infrastructure, China Science and Technology Journal Database, and Superstar Journals Database. The 2022 edition of Journal Citation Reports® cites the 2021 impact factor (IF) for WJG as 5.374; IF without journal self cites: 5.187; 5-year IF: 5.715; Journal Citation Indicator: 0.84; Ranking: 31 among 93 journals in gastroenterology and hepatology; and Quartile category: Q2. The WJG's CiteScore for 2021 is 8.1 and Scopus CiteScore rank 2021: Gastroenterology is 18/149.

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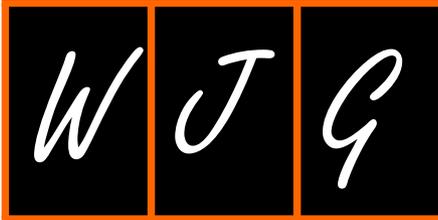
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## How to select a journal for your research

José M Ramia

**Specialty type:** Gastroenterology and hepatology

**Provenance and peer review:** Invited articles; Externally peer reviewed.

**Peer-review model:** Single blind

**Peer-review report's scientific quality classification**

Grade A (Excellent): A  
Grade B (Very good): B  
Grade C (Good): 0  
Grade D (Fair): 0  
Grade E (Poor): 0

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### Abstract

Publication in a peer-reviewed journal is the goal of any research project. One of the most important (and possibly the least understood) aspects of the publication process is the choice of a suitable journal that is likely to accept your work. Detailed information and tips and tricks to success are given in this editorial.

**Key Words:** Research; Journal; Altmetrics; Publication

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**Core Tip:** Knowing the tips and tricks to choose the best journal for publishing your research is crucial. A narrative check list including all these tricks has been performed.

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### INTRODUCTION

Publication in a peer-reviewed journal is the goal of any research project. It is through publication that your research reaches your colleagues in the field, advancing knowledge and encouraging communication between groups[1]. Although peer review can be a time-consuming and often tiring process, the publication of your manuscript validates your work and can help to advance your career, attract students and experienced staff, and obtain funding for future studies[1]. One of the most important (and possibly the least understood) aspects of the publication process is the choice of a suitable journal that is likely to accept your work[2,3]. Submitting your paper to the wrong journal may result in a series of rejections, stalling both your

research and your career[1,2,4].

Realistic assessment of your work is crucial. Both novice and well-known researchers can make the error of submitting their work to an inappropriate journal[1]. First-time authors or those who are branching out into broader areas of research may be unfamiliar with the journals in the field. In these cases, seeking out mentorship could be crucial[5]. For their part, experienced authors may be tempted to publish in the same journals as always, and thus ignore the new publication opportunities that are constantly arising. Even rigorous, high-impact work may be rejected when the topic of the research does not align with the scope of the journal and making this mistake wastes time and money and affects motivation[1] (Table 1).

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## EVALUATE YOUR RESEARCH

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The three key features of your work to consider are its novelty, relevance, and appeal[2]. “Novelty” refers to how new your findings are compared with those previously published in your field. If your findings only offer a small step forward in what is already known, your paper is suitable for a journal with a low-to-medium impact factor (IF). However, if you feel your findings might change the way researchers in your field think about a specific topic, you should aim at a high impact factor journal[2]. “Relevance” refers to the applicability of your findings. Relevance may be geographical[2]: That is to say, if your findings with only a regional focus, choose a regional journal, but if they have worldwide implications, choose an international journal. Or relevance might be disciplinary: If your findings are highly specific for your field, choose a specialized journal, but if they have implications for researchers in other fields, choose a more general or interdisciplinary journal[2,5]. Finally, “appeal” refers to the topical interest of your study: journal editors are keen on manuscripts on current hot topics or with real-world applications[2].

You should also narrow your focus with regard to your expected readership[2,6]. The main questions to answer are the following. Is your study clinical or basic? Are the findings relevant to a broad cross-section of the scientific community, or to researchers in a specialist field? Are the findings preliminary or definitive? And finally, if you collect more data, could you try a journal with a higher IF[2]?

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## IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT JOURNAL

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It is best to choose your journal before you start writing[2,3]. The reasons are that journals have specific criteria related to the manuscript structure, word limits, and reference style; they have specific focuses, or scopes; and editors will often look at your references to see whether you have cited articles published in their journal[2]. So, once you have chosen a journal, identify articles published there that have a bearing on your manuscript and include them among your references.

A tip for how choosing the journal is to perform a search with the keywords (or title) of your manuscript in literature databases such as Medline and PubMed. This search can identify similar or related studies and the journals where they were published[6]. Try to find between three and five manuscripts published in the last five years and decide whether they resemble yours in terms of quality and scope[7]. Identifying previously published papers in your specific subject area is an excellent way to be sure that your research topic is of interest to the readership of a particular journal, and this will obviously increase your chances of review.

There are also a variety of online resources that suggest target journals based on keywords, abstract content and so on: Journal/Author Name Estimator (Jane)<sup>®</sup>, Manuscript Matcher<sup>®</sup>, and JournalGuide<sup>®</sup> (Clarivate), *etc.* But remember that journals that have not previously published in the same area of research might also be interested in your findings.

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## FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN SELECTING THE BEST JOURNAL

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### **Impact factor**

IF is still the default method to assess the quality and reputation of a journal[7]. It displays the total citations made of the journal’s articles[7]. IF is the most important factor that researchers consider when they submit a paper, and it is often used as a measure of a researcher’s success in his/her field[2,6]. Funding agencies, Institutions, employers, and university committees also consider IF the best method to evaluate a paper[2,6,7]. Journals with higher IF often have a higher profile, and this obviously will increase your article’s visibility[4,6].

Nonetheless, the validity of the Journal IF as a metric for journal quality is controversial due to the many factors that can influence the rating achieved, and to the fact that not all these factors are directly related to the quality of the publications within the journal[3]. Although it is tempting to submit a manuscript to the journal with the highest IF factor, it is important to evaluate your research objectively

Table 1 Tips and tricks for selecting best journal

Item	Description
Evaluate your research	Novelty, relevance, and appeal
Identifying the right journal	
Factors to consider in selecting the best journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact factor</li> <li>Aims and scope</li> <li>Publication types</li> <li>Publication mode and rights: Type of publication; supplementary materials/media and relevant links; type of subscription; open access; and copyright</li> <li>Publication charges</li> <li>Publication frequency</li> <li>Time from acceptance to publication</li> <li>Rejection rates</li> <li>Readership</li> <li>Indexing</li> <li>Editor's preferences</li> <li>Peer-review</li> <li>Transfer cascades</li> <li>Journal reputation</li> </ul>

and decide whether it is truly suitable for a high IF journal. Otherwise, you will risk wasting valuable time and effort as you submit your manuscript time and again to multiple journals[1].

Other scores are: Scimago Journal Rank, Eigenfactor, SNIP, Cited Halflife, Altmetric Attention Score, and Cited Score, *etc*[3,5,8].

### **Aims and scope**

Even remarkable research may be rejected if the topic is not in line with the scope of the journal[2,6,7]. This information is usually readily available on the journal's homepage[3,6,7]. Check to see whether the journal is publishing research like yours[5,7,9]. The topics, the focus and the novelty and potential impact are all important factors[7].

### **Publication types**

Find out which article types (*e.g.*, originals, reviews, systematic reviews, metanalysis, case reports, images, and so on) are accepted and which are not; limits on length (word count) or number of illustrations or references; whether supplementary files are allowed, or the prior inclusion of a preprint (unsubmitted draft) in a preprint server such as arXiv or bioRxiv[1-3,7,9]. Submission to a journal that does not accept the type of article you have written is a sure way of guaranteeing immediate rejection. Please read the guide to authors carefully and follow the instructions closely[1,7,9]. The abstract and cover letter are your way of presenting yourself to the Editor: Take your time over them.

To avoid initial rejection, the registration of research in international databases (ClinicalTrials, Research Registry, PROSPERO, *etc*) is often mandatory. The inclusion of a reporting Checklist, depending on the type of manuscript (*e.g.*, STROBE, PRISMA, and so on) is normally required. You should check this before sending your manuscript.

### **Publication mode and rights**

You should be familiar with the journal's characteristics: Type of publication: print only, print plus online version (PDF), which may be a longer version, with or without early view ("early online", "online first", or "ahead of print") version, or only online version, which is becoming the most usual type[9].

Supplementary materials/media and relevant links: Many journals have links to supplementary materials in an online repository[2].

Type of subscription: Membership-based, pay per view, site license, subscription, or open access.

### **Open access**

Open access means that the entire content of the paper is freely available to all readers, with no need to subscribe to a journal or pay to access the paper[6]. Many researchers prefer this publication model because it can help disseminate their research to a wider audience[2,6]. There is no doubt that increasing the accessibility of your article will ensure that your target audience will have access to your article worldwide, but expenses are high. There are three formats:

**Green open access:** which means free access to preprint or accepted manuscript (final draft) on a personal website, institutional website, or nonprofit repository such as Pubmed®, with or without a time delay before uploading; in most cases the copyright will be retained by the publisher[6].

**Gold open access:** free access to the final published version (typically on the publisher's website), and authors retain copyright[6]. Gold open access gives you ownership of your work after publication and ensures that the most accurate, final form of the paper is available to all readers[6].

**Hybrid open access:** (some content is open access, and some is subscription-based; this can depend on authors' choice or on journal policy, which may include "delayed open access").

### **Copyright**

It may be owned by the author or the journal publisher. Another important issue is whether a Creative Commons license is available.

### **Publication charges**

Publication charges are the fees that you will be charged to publish in a journal[6]. It is essential to read the section about charges very carefully[2]. If you are on a tight Article budget, you may need to rule out open access journals or journals with high publication charges. There are several types of charge: Submission fee, production fee and charges for color figures (usually black and white images do not incur charges)[2]. Find out whether there are free batches of reprints or online copies, and free online access for authors to published articles. Some editorials waive article processing charges to authors from developing countries for open access publication.

Find out whether the following services are provided free or included in the publication charge: Editing/illustration service; news release service; marketing; social media promotion; post-publication commenting and altmetrics (article-level metrics) tracking.

### **Publication frequency**

Check the journal's table of contents for the number of monthly/weekly articles, articles per issue and issues per year, and how often articles appear in the journal's Online First section[2,7].

### **Time from acceptance to publication**

There are several publication times: From submission to first/final decision, first online publication, final (online) publication. If you need rapid publication, you should specifically look for journals that offer fast response times and short periods from acceptance to publication[2].

The normal time taken for a good manuscript to be published in a reputed journal is around 9 mo to 12 mo. The optimum time limit for rejection is 4-6 wk[7]. The best time is to wait for the special editions from reputed journals and then submit a relevant paper: due to the smaller number of research papers submitted at that time, your research stands a better chance of being published[7].

### **Rejection rates**

It is important to know the selectivity (% acceptance rate) of the journal[2]. The acceptance rate in poor journals is over 90%, while predatory journals publish almost everything, they can lay their hands on. In good journals the acceptance rate is 10%-20%[7,9].

### **Readership**

Identify the interests of the readers[2,3] Be sure that the target audience you are trying to reach is part of the readership of the journal. Your goal is not just to be published, but also to be widely read in your field. Review the "Most Downloaded" or "Most Cited" lists from your potential journals. If you find that your manuscript is similar in scope to articles in this list from one of your potential journals, this suggests that if you publish in this journal your article will be widely read as well.

### **Indexing**

To increase the online visibility of your article, be sure that the journal is indexed in the online databases that your target audience will use to find articles. PubMed® and Scopus® are the main indexing services used by researchers in the biomedical sciences[2,6].

**Editor's preferences**

It is also very useful to identify the interests of the journal's editor. Just because your manuscript may be similar in scope to the journal, this does not mean that the Editor is currently interested in your topic. Check when similar articles were published in the journal. If similar articles have been published within the last two or three years, this suggests that the Editor is probably interested in your topic. Look at recently published Editorials, Review Articles, and Special Issues, because these usually focus on topics the Editor feels are currently important for the field. If you find that your manuscript is similar in scope to others published by one of your potential journals, this suggests that the Editor may regard your research topic as important.

**Peer-review**

Articles published in peer-reviewed journals enjoy high esteem among the academic and scientific community[6,7,9]. The quality of the reviewers is also a crucial factor[9]. There are several types of peer-review: The most common is a closed (single- or double-blind) review, but open peer-review is also performed. Other types of review are collaborative (in which reviewers may discuss issues with each other, or reviewers/editors may discuss specific points with the authors) and transparent (in which reviews are published with or without reviewers' names). As for the speed of peer review, you should find out whether fast-track review and pre-submission inquiries are allowed. Journals with very short review times (1-2 wk) are often poor quality (though bear in mind that there are also some top journals with very short review times).

**Transfer cascades**

One feature of scientific publishing that many researchers are unaware of is the existence of "families" or portfolios of journals inside the same publishing house. Many portfolios with prestigious journals that receive a high volume of submissions also contain less competitive journals that publish papers on the same or similar topics. In many cases, if a publisher with this type of portfolio rejects your paper from a high IF journal, they may offer to transfer it to a lower IF journal inside the same "family". This can help accelerate the overall publication process by avoiding the need to identify a new journal, reformat the paper and prepare a new submission[6]. Bear in mind that some transfer cascades direct you to journals with publication charges.

**Journal reputation**

Remember that publishing in poor quality journals does not count as scientific contribution to knowledge. Avoid sending work to predatory journals, as this is a waste of time and effort[3,7]. There are many points to check in order to ensure the quality of the journal before sending your manuscript [2]: Are the journal/publisher, editor and editorial board well known? Is the journal affiliated to a professional society? Is the journal recommended by your library/society? Do your colleagues read the journal, or have they been cited there, or have they published there? Is the journal known for ethics, quality content, language, and production? Is the journal included in respected general or specific indexes, with a long history and a permanent online archive[7]? What are the journal's bibliometric scores (IF)? How old is the journal (those aged 10 years or more are often good)?

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**CONCLUSION**

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After all the hard work that goes into performing successful research, the final crucial step is choosing the right journal in which to publish. With almost 10000 journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals alone, choosing the best journal can be a daunting prospect even for experienced researchers, and making the wrong decision can cost valuable time, money, and effort. Key factors are being aware of the aims and scope of the journal; identifying papers that are similar in quality and scope; assessing the journal's restrictions; and considering the impact factor and potential reach. Despite the existence of support platforms, the development of artificial intelligence platforms may help us to decide the best journal for our research. Items like specific area, number of patients included, clinical relevance and innovation may well be able to identify the most interesting journal.

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**FOOTNOTES**

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## REFERENCES

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