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“Why didn’t anyone tell me this?”

An idiosyncratic guide to journal publishing
and being an academic citizen

Gesis, Cologne, 6 February 2018



Idiosyncratic editor's advice, or an editor's idiosyncratic advice (you decide)

Before you submit

Some pieces of advice

After you submit

More pieces of advice

Being a good academic citizen

is in your self-interest



#1 Choose general interest over specialized journal
(also applies to many journal-crowded sub-fields).



#1 Choose general interest over specialized journal
(also applies to many journal-crowded sub-fields).

- What is my contribution to the literature?
- Who do I want to read and cite my work?

Nominating women for Europe: Exploring the role of political parties' recruitment procedures for European Parliament elections

J Fortin-Rittberger, B Rittberger



#2 Unsure if your paper fits journal x?



#2 Unsure if your paper fits journal x?

- Look at your bibliography.
- Which journals do I regularly read and cite for my work?
- Ask a mentor and/or experienced peers/colleagues.
- Ask the editor/s.



#3 Don't be shy, aim high.



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- Journal reputation matters (for getting academic jobs, promotions, but also recognition for and exposure of your work).
- Ask peers, colleagues, your mentor.
- Widely used proxies:
 - Professionalism of editorial teams (hard to know, but: turnaround time).
 - Rejection rates
<<http://www.reviewmyreview.eu/acceptance-rates-turnaround-time>>.
 - Bibliometrics.



1	AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE	9,572	5.044
2	WORLD POLITICS	3,348	4.025
3	REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	1,510	3.452
4	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	5,322	3.406
5	POLITICAL ANALYSIS	2,766	3.361
6	AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW	11,746	3.316
6	BRITISH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE	2,962	3.316
8	Perspectives on Politics	1,513	3.234
9	JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC POLICY	2,822	2.982
10	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	2,877	2.959
11	JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	3,900	2.947
12	Regulation & Governance	598	2.898
13	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL RESEARCH	3,659	2.891

Journal **Impact Factor** (IF) reflects the number of citations, received in that particular year, of articles published in that journal during the two preceding years, divided by the total number of articles published in that journal during the two preceding years.

$$IF_{2014} = \frac{\text{Citations}_{2013} + \text{Citations}_{2012}}{\text{Publications}_{2013} + \text{Publications}_{2012}}$$

Source: Thomson Reuters, JCR 2017.



Top publications

Categories > Social Sciences > Political Science ▾

h5-index is the h-index for articles published in the last 5 complete years. It is the largest number h such that h articles published in 2012-2016 have at least h citations each. [hide](#)

	Publication	h5-index	h5-median
1.	American Journal of Political Science	<u>64</u>	104
2.	American Political Science Review	<u>57</u>	104
3.	The Journal of Politics	<u>47</u>	81
4.	Comparative Political Studies	<u>45</u>	65
5.	Journal of European Public Policy	<u>45</u>	57
6.	JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies	<u>43</u>	70
7.	British Journal of Political Science	<u>40</u>	61
8.	Journal of Democracy	<u>37</u>	50
9.	Annual Review of Political Science	<u>36</u>	76
10.	West European Politics	<u>36</u>	61
11.	Political Studies	<u>34</u>	48
12.	Electoral Studies	<u>34</u>	44
13.	Political Analysis	<u>33</u>	87

Source: Google Scholar Metrics, 2017.



#4 Make one contribution. Save the other one for another paper.



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- Note of caution: SPU-publishing bears reputational risks. Don't try to sell the same contribution twice. It can be damaging for your reputation.
- Make sure you acknowledge and reference your own work appropriately.

#5 Always submit a clean manuscript.



#5 Always submit a clean manuscript.

- Follow the submission guidelines (they exist for a reason).
- Stick to the word limit (it exists for a reason).
- Proof-read, spell check, language check.
- I don't agree with Fabrizio here. Signal professionalism on all fronts.



#6 Expect desk rejection (and don't be put off by it).



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- Everyone gets desk rejected almost all of the time.
- It's not necessarily a bad thing: Saves everyone time and effort.
- Allows you to move on quickly (have a plan B, C, D ready for action).
- A typical desk reject reads like this:

We want to thank you again for submitting your manuscript to the [REDACTED]

The editors think that the paper is interesting and has the potential to make a significant scholarly contribution.

However, they feel that it does not fit the broad scope of our Journal. As a 'general' journal in political science, the editors want the articles published in the [REDACTED] to speak to as large an audience as possible within the discipline.

All best wishes,



#7 Yes, you can ask the editor why the review process takes so long (>10-12 weeks).



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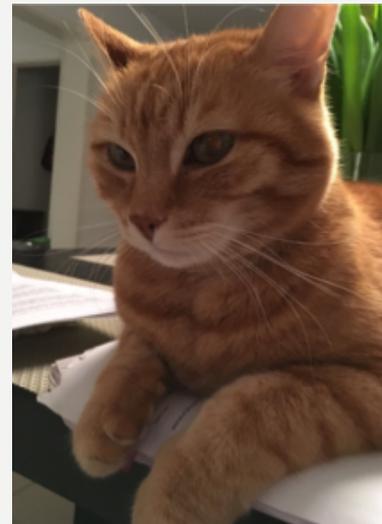
- Why does it take so (bloody) long?
- Editors and reviewers tend to have a full-time academic jobs.
- Bigger journals receive >1 submission daily.
- Finding reviewers can be very hard.
- Making reviewers deliver on time can be even harder.
- Some journals could be better managed (→reputation).



#8 Embrace for rejection. Statistically, it's the most likely outcome (and don't be put off by it).

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- Sorry, that's all there is to be said about it. Really.
- This might help.





#9 Take rejection elegantly (even if you are convinced that the editors and reviewers are [total] losers).



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- Reviewers err, editors err. It's an imperfect process.
- Let a couple of days pass, and re-submit elsewhere.
- Express gratitude for the reviews and the time and effort put into the review process.
- And remember that everyone has met or will meet "Reviewer 2". Share your experience with your peers. You will feel better.

From <urbandictionary.com>

TOP DEFINITION

Reviewer 2

Condescending asshole. Actively misinterprets **everything you say**.

Stop it **Dave**, you're **acting** like an **absolute** Reviewer 2.

by **scholar42** May 17, 2016

👍 👎

Get a **Reviewer 2** mug for your bunkmate Jerry.




ShitMyReviewersSay
@YourPaperSucks

Collecting the finest real specimens of reviewer comments since 1456. Submit now!
shitmyreviewerssay.tumblr.com/submit

Tweets 1.096 Folge ich 1.007 Follower 38 Tsd. Gefällt mir 143 Folgen

Tweets Tweets & Antworten Medien

Angefilterter Tweet

ShitMyReviewersSay @YourPaperSucks · 13. Nov. 2014
"I am afraid this manuscript may contribute not so much towards the field's advancement as much as toward its eventual demise."

Original (English) übersetzen

facebook

Reviewer 2 Must Be Stopped!

"You know Reviewer 2:

- The one who wrote "this has already been done" to reject your paper, without any references to the literature...
- The one who sat on your paper for 6 months while they frantically ran their competing experiment...
- The one who goes on an on about how the method you used sucks (except s/he misread the paper and you didn't use that method)..."



#10 When you submit elsewhere, remember that $p(\text{facing the same reviewer}) > 0$.



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- It actually happens quite often.
- And it makes a lot of sense to take (some of) their comments on board.



#11 When you receive a R&R decision, it's a big deal. The game is on!



#11 When you receive a R&R decision, it's a big deal: The game is on!

- First, go celebrate. (Personal advice from Matt Gabel: us academics have so little to celebrate, we must make use of every occasion.)
- Then get to work, and don't linger (finishing a promising paper should be high on everyone's agenda).
- But if you need more time, ask the editors. They tend to be accommodating.



#12 Remember that revisions require effort on two fronts:
your paper and your memo.



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No goes:

- Picking & choosing, omitting points.
- “I cannot address this point due to space constraints...” (→use online appendix!)

Imperatives:

- Offer concise answers to each point: describe your changes & provide additional analyses.
- State clearly where and why you did not follow the advice of the reviewers.
- Have your peers and adviser or mentor read the memo.
- Ethics: reviewers have invested time, take them seriously. Be nice!



ADDRESSING REVIEWER COMMENTS

BAD REVIEWS ON YOUR PAPER? FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES AND YOU MAY YET GET IT PAST THE EDITOR:

Reviewer comment:

"The method/device/paradigm the authors propose is clearly wrong."

How NOT to respond:

✗ "Yes, we know. We thought we could still get a paper out of it. Sorry."

Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, as the focus of this work is exploratory and not performance-based, validation was not found to be of critical importance to the contribution of the paper."

Reviewer comment:

"The authors fail to reference the work of Smith et al., who solved the same problem 20 years ago."

How NOT to respond:

✗ "Huh. We didn't think anybody had read that. Actually, their solution is better than ours."

Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, our work is based on completely different first principles (we use different variable names), and has a much more attractive graphical user interface."

Reviewer comment:

"This paper is poorly written and scientifically unsound. I do not recommend it for publication."

How NOT to respond:

✗ "You #&@*% reviewer! I know who you are! I'm gonna get you when it's my turn to review!"

Correct response:

✓ "The reviewer raises an interesting concern. However, we feel the reviewer did not fully comprehend the scope of the work, and misjudged the results based on incorrect assumptions."

www.phdcomics.com



We are very grateful to all our four reviewers for their very detailed and constructive comments. Following the suggestions of our reviewers, we have revised and rewritten large parts of the manuscript and believe that the manuscript has benefitted considerably from the revisions suggested by our reviewers. ¶

In this memo, we list the changes made to the manuscript in response to the various comments provided by the reviewers. On the basis of the comments, we not only added, rewrote or grouped passages in the text, we also partially re-structured sections of the paper to render the argument more clear and stringent. As a result, we felt that the track changes-option would make the resulting text very difficult to read. We thus decided to opt for a more extensive memo, in which we indicate the changes made to manuscript in direct response to the reviewers' comments (see below). ¶

Thank you very much again for the helpful comments and for giving us the opportunity to revise our paper. ¶

With best regards ¶

The authors ¶

Reviewer: 1 ¶

However, my main concern with the paper has to do with its main result – namely that those deputies who feel EU to be salient or perceive themselves as having influence in EU affairs develop also more contacts for engaging in European politics. This personal, or individual, level of explanation is much more important than the organizational or system-level variables. But this finding is somewhat unsatisfactory or even tautological, inviting the follow-up question of what explains this individual saliency or perceived influence in EU politics (this question is also posed by the author in the concluding paragraph when discussing future research)? Now some of these potential explanations are included in the regression analysis (e.g. government / opposition status, Euroscepticism, gender, parliamentary experience etc.), but surely the author could make fuller use of the data to test the impact of other variables now missing from the equation. For example, do socio-economic individual factors, ideological factors (such as party affiliation, party position on the left-right or EU dimension), or factors relating to constituencies impact on the likelihood to become involved in EU affairs? ¶

These are all very important points, which we have now addressed in various sections of the manuscript. ¶

- In the conclusion (p. 21-22) we have added one paragraph where we problematize the direction of causality-issue and potential biases resulting from self-selection (we included a new footnote [fn. 12] to discuss this problem in more detail). Moreover, we included a set of additional factors as controls for MPs' EU-related involvement as suggested by the reviewer (p. 20, first paragraph). ¶

- In response to the reviewer's inquiry about salience and perceived influence, we conducted a series of additional analyses. Our salience variable remains significant even after controlling for a diverse set of individual-level variables (education, party affiliation, left-right self-positioning), constituency-related variables (amount of local European Regional Development Fund-means received between 2007-2010), and Länder-related variables (distinctiveness of regional political culture, financial status, "experience" with the EU [East vs. West German states] and the EU's importance for the regional economy and population size). Our data show

that salience is positively correlated with membership in an EAC and the perception of subjective advantages from EU membership. Salience does not differ significantly between regional MPs who are member of a majority or minority parliamentary group or between those who hold special parliamentary offices or are "backbenchers". Nevertheless, we fully agree that further research is needed to address the question about which factors shape the salience that MPs attribute to EU politics (in this context, we think that studies about MPs' career paths or panel data that enables us to study learning or socialization effects would be particularly interesting). ¶

Minor points: ¶

The concluding section is a bit flat, and the author could thus engage in a discussion about the 'generalizability' of her findings. Given that German Länder are particularly strong regions in the EU, how might the results differ in other member states with regional legislatures (e.g. Spain or Belgium). ¶

We agree. We have rewritten large parts of the conclusion, which now includes a discussion about the (limited) potential for generalization. ¶

Some of the paragraphs, such as in the introductory section, are exceedingly long and should be shortened. ¶

We followed this advice and shortened the introduction by closing off some of the misleading tracks. ¶

Reviewer: 2 ¶

The quite long introductory part of the paper (p. 2-5) lacks a clearly stated aim of the article with specific research question(s) to be addressed. The reader gets confused what is the main object of the empirical analysis which will ensue: is it "why regional MPs get involved in EU politics and why some may be more active than others"; "how individual MPs respond to the increasing political relevance of the EU"; or "what is the scope and intensity of MPs EU related activities". These questions should be structured according to their importance. ¶

Many thanks for pointing this out. We have clarified this in the introduction (p. 3, bottom paragraph) and in section 2, where we provide a detailed conceptualization of our explanandum. ¶

The main weakness of this part of the paper is that it contains several mutually contradictory claims about German Länder position in EU affairs. Firstly, the statement that German states lost legislative influence via the Bundesrat (p.1 line 25) is misleading since the Länder are guaranteed participation in decisions concerning the EU through the Bundesrat (Article 23 of the Basic Law). Secondly, we read that, "unsurprisingly", Länder are commonly evaluated as "quite powerful players in EU politics who secured extensive information and scrutiny rights"; to finally find out that they possess constitutionally guaranteed role in EU affairs (p 4. line 52). As regards the main object of analysis, i.e. Länder parliaments, we first read that these are frequently evaluated as "losers of European integration" (p.2 line 5 - which does not hold logically with the case study choice justification), to subsequently find out that from a cross-country perspective German Länder "constitute a most promising environment for parliamentary activities" (p. 4, line 52-57). The author(s) should decide which stance they take as a starting point for their analysis. ¶



#13 When your piece is accepted, follow Matt's advice.



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- I.e., go celebrate for real.
- Update your CV only once your piece is formally accepted (you can state it as *forthcoming*).
- Read and correct the proofs carefully. Changing the spelling of your last name later can be a real pain.
- Disseminate your piece once it has a "DOI".
- Place it on your website, but: make sure you comply with open access rules.
- Make sure your paper appears on your and/or your department's academic social media pages (e.g. Google Scholar; ResearchGate, etc.).

#14 We need you.





#14 We need you.



- Peer review is our profession's lifeblood.
- And academia is a system that relies on diffuse reciprocity: We behave cooperatively “not because of ensuing rewards from specific actors, but in the interests of continuing satisfactory overall results for the group of which one is a part, as a whole.” (Robert Keohane)
- There is a lot in it for you: knowing cutting edge stuff, knowing what makes a good/bad paper, indication of “my standing” in the field.
- But: you need to budget sufficient time (approx. one work day per round); and beware of the Matthew-effect!

#15 You owe us.



↑
Editor

#15 You owe us.

- Rule of thumb: When you receive x reviews from journal y , you owe x reviews to journal y .
- You also owe other journals to which you have not yet submitted (\rightarrow diffuse reciprocity).
- Do your reviews promptly: Do not exceed the timeframe (if you have to, ask for an extension right away): it's good for you (\rightarrow reputation), for the editor (\rightarrow journal efficiency), for authors (\rightarrow you also want a quick turn-around time).



Editor



#16 You can say “no”.



#16 You can say “no”.

- But say it promptly.
- Say “no” when you are biased (conflict of interest) or if it is not your field.
- Set priorities: everyone is busy all of the time.
- Offer your help by, e.g., naming alternative reviewers, and let the editors know when you are available to review again.



#17 As a reviewer, try to be a good citizen.



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“I tend to pride myself for always providing positive and constructive feedback, but the paper on ... makes this a nearly impossible task. ... its analysis hardly goes beyond tealeaf reading. ... The index combines apples, oranges, and mutant killer tomatoes, where the individual attributes do not even come close to measuring the same underlying concept.”



#17 As a reviewer, try to be a good citizen.

Be nice.

Mention the strong parts, so authors know where they succeeded. Help them improve their piece. Don't judge them as persons.

Be specific.

Be precise about nature of the problem; offer examples; offer specific solutions.

Be constructive.

Don't only complain about a problem, offer ideas how to fix it.

And don't let your ego take over.

If you have stakes, suppress them. Watch out for egocentrism if your work is not cited. If you think you are cleverer than the author/s, a review is definitely not the place to show off.



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- Or as my mentor and journal co-editor tends to say: “Everyone is entitled to have to listen to my opinion.”
- I wish you the best of success with your work and publication experiences!



No one is responsible for this random list, but myself. In compiling this list, I have drawn inspiration from many colleagues, whose work, wisdom, humility, and humor I strongly admire (I bet they don't know). To name only a few: Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, Matt Gabel, Thomas Gschwend, Fabrizio Gilardi's Twitter Account, Jeremy Richardson, as well as many authors, reviewers, and Reviewer #2's.