

AVOID THESE COMMON ERRORS WHEN SUBMITTING YOUR RESEARCH FOR PUBLICATION

Rejection is commonplace in the academic publishing process. Even researchers at the top of their field have experienced rejection. Several peer-reviewed studies have investigated the reasons that journals reject papers.¹⁻¹³ Authors often find manuscript preparation the most challenging aspect of journal publication. Many authors, especially non-native speakers of English, even find it very difficult to understand journal instructions. In a survey study involving East Asian authors and international journal editors, both authors and editors said that authors would benefit from pre-submission editing, journal formatting, artwork preparation, and peer review services.¹⁴ Here are some of the most common reasons for rejection, most of which authors can tackle with the help of pre-submission editing services.

1. Lack of originality, novelty, or significance

One of America's leading newspapers, the New York Times, recognized the truth that "journal editors typically prefer to publish groundbreaking new research."¹⁵ Academic journals are constantly on the lookout for research that is exciting and fresh. Many authors tend to cite the reason that "this has never been studied before" to explain why their paper is significant. This is not good enough; the study needs to be placed in a broader context. Authors should give specific reasons as to why the research is important. For example, the research could affect a particular medical intervention, it could have a bearing on a specific policy discussion, or it could change a conventional theory or belief. Manuscripts may get rejected if the results are not generalizable; if the methods used have become obsolete because of newer technologies or techniques; if the paper presents merely a secondary analysis that extends or replicates published findings without adding any substantial knowledge; and if the results are unoriginal, predictable, trivial, or have no theoretical, clinical, or practical implications.

2. Flaws in study design

Even a well-written paper will not mask flaws in study design. Indeed, this is a fundamental problem that must be resolved in the initial stages of the study, while conceptualizing the study. Flaws in study design could occur as a result of a poorly formulated research question; poor conceptualization of the approach to answering the research question; choice of a weak, unreliable, or incorrect method; an inappropriate statistical analysis; unreliable or incomplete data; and a small or inappropriately chosen sample. Researchers should always get their methodology reviewed by their supervisor or a senior colleague, and get their data analyzed by a statistical expert.

3. Mismatch with the journal scope

Many manuscripts are rejected outright by journals, before they even undergo peer review, because the manuscript is not appropriate for the journal's readership or does not fit into

the journal's aims and scope. Manuscripts could also be rejected because the findings are of interest to a very narrow or specialized audience that the journal does not specifically cater to, or because the manuscript does not follow the format specified by the journal (e.g., a case report submitted to a journal that explicitly states that it does not publish case reports). Through Wolters-Kluwer author services, Editage offers authors several free learning resources that will help them select the best journal for their paper.

4. Ethical issues

Ethical issues like plagiarism, data fabrication, or data falsification are also equally serious issues that could result in rejection. In fact, it is possible that such issues may initially go undetected but may be caught after publication, in which case it could result in a retraction!

5. Lack of adherence to journal guidelines

Journals provide instructions for authors, many of which are journal-specific, and if the author does not heed these instructions at the time of submission it could lead to outright rejection or the paper being sent back to the author before peer review.

6. Poor writing and organization

It is very important for authors to present a persuasive and rational argument in their papers. Authors should be able to convince readers that their research is both sound and important. However, sometimes authors are unable to draft a well-organized paper. Some instances of such organizational flaws in writing are (1) the introduction section is unable to establish the background of the problem being studied; (2) the methods section is not detailed enough to allow replication of the study; (3) the discussion section repeats the results instead of interpreting them; (4) the literature review is incomplete; (5) the conclusions are not adequately supported by the study data; and (6) the authors have failed to place their study in a broad context.



7. Poorly presented visual elements

Another reason that manuscripts may be rejected is if the information in the figures, tables, images, and graphs is inaccurate or if the figures are not labeled correctly. Many journal editors and peer reviewers jump to the figures and tables immediately after the abstract to get a sense of the results and their significance, so errors in these could well affect the journal decision.

8. Language and spelling errors

Wordiness, excessive use of jargon, and careless errors like grammar or spelling mistakes can definitely result in harsh negative comments from the peer reviewers, if not manuscript rejection. Peer reviewers often judge a manuscript on the

author's writing quality and not just the research study itself; therefore, a manuscript may get negative feedback for this reason even though the quality of research itself is high.

As seen in the table below, pre-submission editing services can support researchers throughout the publication process and help them avoid some of these common reasons for rejection. Wolters Kluwer, in partnership with Editage, offers services that support authors at every stage of publication and also provides useful learning resources to guide researchers to achieve their goal of publication.

Thus, with Wolters Kluwer author services, authors can minimize their chances of rejection and maximize their chances of success.

S. No	Manuscript rejection reason	How Wolters Kluwer author services can help
1.	Lack of originality, novelty, or significance	Free educational resources at wkauthorservices.editage.com/resources/
2.	Flaws in study design	Rapid technical review
3.	Mismatch with the journal scope	Journal selection
4.	Ethical issues	Plagiarism check
5.	Lack of adherence to journal guidelines	Journal-specific formatting
6.	Poor writing and organization	English editing
7.	Poorly presented visual elements	Artwork preparation
8.	Language and spelling errors	- English editing - Translation with editing

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