

Get your research noticed!

Essential tips for scientific papers

How can you ensure that your research gets published and noticed? Not every researcher is a natural communicator or a gifted writer. However, every researcher can produce a good scientific paper.

Before you start writing, ask yourself the following question: What is the added value of my research? This must be crystal clear. If you cannot state in a few words what your research has demonstrated and why this is important for science then you are not ready to publish.

Next, think carefully about where you want to publish your research. Of course a cover article in *Nature* or *Science* looks good on your CV but your chances of rejection are high. Some research merits a high-profile, widely read journal, whereas other research needs to be shared with fellow specialists. Make sure you find the right audience for your research and choose a journal that is interested in what you have to offer.

Then once you have chosen a journal make sure you read the instructions for authors. That sounds so obvious. Yet over half the papers we get to edit fail to comply with the instructions for authors. Each journal has its own rules so do not make any assumptions! Remember that publishing is an expensive business and so word limits are there for a reason. Follow the journal's guidelines for structuring your paper and their instructions for figures and tables. This is simply a matter of ticking off the list. Doing it makes the journal's life easy and means the reviewers will focus more on your paper's content and less on your paper's appearance.

Finally, before you worry too much about the finer details of grammar remember that papers get rejected because the message is not clear! Your paper should answer these simple questions: Why did you do the research? How did you do it? What did you learn? Why is that important? Realise that like you, editors and reviewers are busy. If they are not convinced of the added value of your paper within the abstract and the opening two paragraphs of the introduction, they will reject it.

Pay particular attention to the abstract. It is the elevator pitch for your research. Everyone can read it for free online and it will be used by citation databases. And before you submit it, let a non-specialist read your paper. If that person can follow the story of your research and tell you why you did it, then you have got your message across!

Previously published in Dutch as a guest blog on [Wetenschapper 2.0](#) in March 2013