



Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research

Editorial: Getting Started With Your Writing for Publication Project

Writing for publication can be perceived as an overwhelming and difficult task by those who have had little experience in the writing process. However, in order for a professional person to advance and grow, he/she must engage in scholarly activities. Writing for publication is one form of scholarship.

Prior to beginning the process of writing, especially for a novice author, one needs to examine why he/she may not have engaged previously in writing for publication. The reasons may include, but are not limited to: a) feeling insecure about the selected writing topic; b) lacking confidence about writing; c) not knowing where to start in the preparation of a manuscript; d) lacking motivation to write; e) being inexperienced with the writing process; f) avoiding potential rejection and criticism of one's work; g) lacking sufficient time to write; h) believing writing is too much work; i) thinking there is nothing to say that would be of interest to others; and, j) not seeing writing or publishing as a job requirement. Any one of these reasons can serve as an excuse! However, every one of these reasons can be overcome and an individual CAN learn to write a publishable manuscript. One should not entertain negative thoughts, but rather take the plunge, develop a plan of action and begin the writing process.

We all remember our experiences and feelings when carrying out a nursing procedure for the first time. No nurse or nursing student should consider performing a procedure without first learning its basic steps. Writing for publication is no different and is just another procedure that can be learned and done by both professional nurses and nursing students. Thus, following a predetermined process of preparation should make the task of writing easier and increase one's chance of success.

The first step in the writing process is to identify the topic about which the individual plans to write. The topic selected needs to be one in which the author has a keen interest. Trying to write about something that is not of interest can cause the author to find writing a tedious task.

The second step involves identification of an appropriate journal for submission of one's manuscript. The topic of the manuscript must fit the purpose of the selected journal, as well the journal's readership. For example, an author would not want to send a clinically-focused manuscript to a solely research-focused journal. Thus, it is imperative for the author to review recent articles (i.e. the last 2 to 3 years) that have been published, in the selected journal, for the purposes of noting: a) the topics that are presented; b) the depth and breadth of the content being presented; and c) the sequence of the content being presented. It is always advisable to try to find an article that is similar, in focus, to the one that the author plans to write. For example, if an author plans to prepare a research manuscript that focuses on instrument development and its psychometric evaluation, it would be advisable for the author to review several articles in the selected journal that had the same focus. This helps in identifying the type of content presentation that is considered publishable.

Step three involves examination of the selected journal's "Instructions to Authors." There is nothing more irritating to the editors or reviewers of a journal when an author fails to follow a journal's instructions for manuscript

preparation. Not following a journal's instructions for manuscript preparation says the author is not attuned to detail nor interested in competing with other authors for a publication. Many editors will reject a manuscript that fails to follow their journal's instructions to authors.

Step four involves improving one's writing skills by obtaining assistance with the writing process. This can involve identification of a mentor who has extensive experience in writing for publication. This is especially important for novice authors. Attending workshops on writing for publication also can prove helpful, since workshop presenters often provide printed materials on aspects of writing and publishing. There also are published articles and books available that can prove helpful to an author.

Step five involves the maintenance of ethical behavior. An author should never plagiarize someone else's written work nor should he/she include a co-author who has not been involved in preparation of the manuscript. Any author's name on a manuscript automatically indicates that person accepts and understands all of the content that has been presented.

Step six focuses on setting aside time to write. This involves identifying a reasonable length of time, on a consistent basis, to sit down and write. It is imperative to write in an environment that is quiet and free from interruptions. Attempting to write in an environment that is noisy and allows for interruptions is detrimental to an author's ability to concentrate and complete thoughts. When writing, all sources of distraction need to be removed.

Step seven involves focusing on one's basic writing skills. This involves spelling, grammar, syntax, sentence structure, organization of ideas, logical flow of content, completion and presentation of ideas in a succinct manner, and appropriate use of existing literature. This is, without question, the most difficult step of the writing process. A novice author needs to understand that numerous revisions of his/her work will need to take place. Even experienced authors will indicate they prepare numerous drafts of their work before they are satisfied with its quality. Producing a manuscript of quality takes time and effort!

Finally, step eight involves a final review of the finished product. This review needs to take place just prior to submission of the manuscript to the selected journal. During the final review, the author needs to make certain: no spelling or grammatical errors exist; all important content is included; and, the journal's "Instructions to Authors" have been followed.

Once the completed manuscript has been sent to the selected journal, the author must wait for a response from the journal editor. This response, generally, takes two to three months. This time frame allows journal reviewers and editors to examine, in depth, the submitted manuscript and to consider its merits. It is the function of the reviewers and editors to assist an author in producing a publishable manuscript. If the result of the manuscript review is rejection, the author needs to carefully examine the reviewers' and editors' comments and then work to strengthen the manuscript based upon their comments. The author then needs to submit the manuscript to another journal. If the result of the manuscript review is revision, this generally means the manuscript content is deemed valuable. However, the author must carefully read the suggestions and revise accordingly. On occasion, a suggestion may be inappropriate. It is acceptable for an author to address an inappropriate suggestion and explain why the suggestion has not been followed. It should always be kept in mind, that the reviewers and editors of a journal are working with the authors to ensure their written contributions to the literature are of quality.

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