

Checklist for Manuscripts to be Submitted to Scientific Journals

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I wrote this checklist in order to have a handy summary of the most important hints for writing scientific papers both for myself and for others, e.g. my PhD students. These hints have been collected from various sources and/or are based on my own experience as PhD supervisor. Several points of this checklist are taken from [Crack et al \(2011\)](#). Furthermore, I am grateful to Mette Asmild, Géraldine Henningsen, Jens Friis Lund, and Jens Leth Hougaard for their suggestions that helped me to improve and extend this checklist. As I want to keep this checklist as short as possible, I only included those points that I (subjectively) found most important. For instance, I decided to only include a very few points about the language and style, because detailed elaborations on these issues have been collected elsewhere, e.g., in “The Elements of Style” ([Strunk, 1920](#), and more recent editions of this book). Feedback on this checklist is highly appreciated.

Preparation of the manuscript

1. The title of your manuscript includes the most important keywords of the research that you describe in your manuscript.
2. The research question is stated clearly in the first few sentences of both the abstract and the introduction ([Crack et al, 2011](#); see also “[Appendix A: Introduction](#)” of this checklist).
3. Both the abstract and the first paragraph of your manuscript include a “hook” ([Crack et al, 2011](#); see also “[Appendix A: Introduction](#)” of this checklist).
4. Your manuscript has a clear and logical structure. (For instance, section “model specification” only describes the model specification and the model specification is only described in section “model specification” and not spread around different parts of the manuscript.)
5. There is a logical flow, sound arguments, and a clear exposition of ideas, i.e. the paragraphs and the sentences within each paragraph follow a clear line of argument. (You probably need to read your manuscript several times to check this.)
6. Each single information that is given in your manuscript is relevant for answering the research question that you address in your manuscript. (Remove all information, e.g. statements or references, that are not crucial for answering your research question.)

7. Most information is given only once in the manuscript, e.g. the text does not simply repeat information that is given in tables or figures but it explains and interprets this information or it highlights the most important information and the "Conclusion" section does not just summarize the results but derives conclusions based on the results.
8. You are 100% sure that the information in each single sentence, equation, figure, table, etc. is correct.
9. You have read and understood all (scientific) works that you cite in your manuscript.
10. You have re-done your analysis (e.g. mathematical derivations, data preparation, econometric estimations, calculations) and got identical results ("reproducibility").
11. The description of your analysis is sufficiently detailed so that others can repeat your research (e.g. if they get access to the same raw data) and get identical results ("reproducibility").
12. All numbers given in tables, figures, and the text of your manuscript correspond to the analysis described in your manuscript. (Thus, all numbers in tables and figures also correspond to the numbers given in the text of your manuscript.)
13. The rows and columns of tables are grouped and ordered according to their characteristics so that the grouping and ordering makes sense to the reader. If the same rows and/or columns are used in different tables, the grouping and ordering of the rows and columns is the same in all these tables.
14. All equations, tables, and figures are numbered consecutively and the references in your manuscript to these equations, tables, and figures use the correct numbers.
15. Your figures and tables are self-contained (i.e. people are able to basically understand the figures and tables without searching the text for detailed information).
16. You refer to (and cite) quality sources in the form of peer-reviewed academic papers and, for data, credible/respectable/reliable sources. This also includes that you refer to (and cite) the original (primary) sources rather than later works that repeat the findings of the original sources. (See also "[Appendix B: Journals](#)".)
17. Working papers or unpublished papers that you cite in your manuscript have not been published in the mean time.
18. All cited references are in the list of references and all references in the list of references are cited in your manuscript.
19. You do not make any value judgements (e.g. using the words "ought" or "should") unless you clearly describe the value system, on which your value judgement is based on.
20. The conclusions that you draw are solely based on the results of your scientific analysis.
21. In every single sentence, you use a clear, simple, accurate, and concise language without unnecessary (filling) words and phrases.
22. You use positive formulations in your text instead of negative formulations (e.g., "the results reject the hypothesis" instead of "the results do not support the hypothesis") and you avoid the passive term as much as possible.
23. You have carefully proofread the manuscript several times and used an automatic spell (and grammar) checker to correct all typos, spelling errors, and grammatical errors.

24. At least one senior colleague read your manuscript and gave you critical feedback ([Crack et al, 2011](#)).
25. If you are not a native speaker of the language of your article, a native speaker has revised the language of the paper.
26. You follow every detail of the journals manuscript formatting guidelines.

Resubmissions

1. You have comprehensively addressed all concerns that were raised by the editor and the reviewers. If it is not possible/desirable/relevant to do so, you have clearly explained why that is.
2. You have taken the comments of the editor and the reviewers seriously. (If they misunderstood a part of your manuscript or they do not follow your line of argument, it usually does not indicate that they are too stupid to read your perfect manuscript but that this part of your manuscript needs to be revised and described more clearly.)
3. You have written a reply to the editor and the reviewers, in which you provide point-by-point specific replies to their comments, where you argue for the course of action in addressing the comments, including what specific changes you have made in the text to respond to the comments or arguments for why you have not made changes.

Appendix A: Introduction

Even excellent ideas do not sell themselves. So, you must give the sales pitch, the contribution, the unique data, the follow-up to something in that journal, or whatever it is that pulls in the referee, the editor, and the journal readership. What have you done and why does it matter? Who cares about this work? ([Crack et al, 2011](#))

In economics, the “introduction formula” ([Head and Brander, 2004](#)) seems to be the social norm ([Bellemare, 2014](#)). The introductions should go through five steps:

1. Hook (attract the reader’s interest)
2. Question (clearly state your research question and explain how you answer it)
3. Antecedents (mini literature review, highlighting that the current literature is incomplete or has deficiencies)
4. Value Added (your contributions in relation to the antecedents, i.e. why this manuscript deserves to be published)
5. Roadmap (“The remainder of this paper is organized as follows...”)

Appendix B: Journals

In my opinion, it is desirable to publish research results in open-access media so that other people (not only researchers) can easily get access to these results and benefit from them. Some open-access journals are highly respectable scientific journals, but a much larger number of open-access journals are so-called “predatory” journals. “Predatory” journals pretend to be peer-reviewed scientific journals but they publish nearly everything irrespective the (scientific) quality as long as the author pays the publication fee. Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado Denver, maintains and frequently updates a list of standalone “predatory” journals and a list of publishers of “predatory” journals at <http://scholarlyoa.com/>. I highly recommend not to submit any paper to a “predatory” journal, because a publication in these journals impairs the author’s scientific reputation. I also recommend not to cite or refer to publications in “predatory” journals, because most research published in these journals is rubbish.

Many different rankings of scientific journals can be found on-line (see, e.g., http://www.cefage.uevora.pt/en/links/revistas_cientificas_rankings). For instance, the Center for Advanced Studies in Management and Economics at the Universidade de Évora, Portugal, has prepared and published a very comprehensive ranking of scientific journals in the fields of economics and management (http://www.cefage.uevora.pt/en/scientific_resources/ranking_de_revistas_cientificas). In a recent paper, Rigby et al (forthcoming) analyse how researchers in the field of agricultural and environmental economics assess the quality of different journals.

References

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