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# How to Get Published in a Research Journal: A Publisher's Guide to Writing Manuscripts

Dean Eastbury, Executive Publisher
John Taylor, Editor of the ***Journal of Cereal* Science**

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# What does a Publisher actually do?

# The Publisher's Role

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Registration

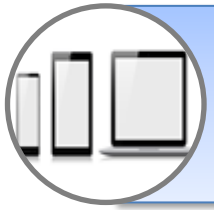
Certification

Dissemination

Preservation

Use

**How do Publishers add value to the scientific & health community?**



Innovation & Technology

# Why Publish with Elsevier?

# Scientific Publishing Industry

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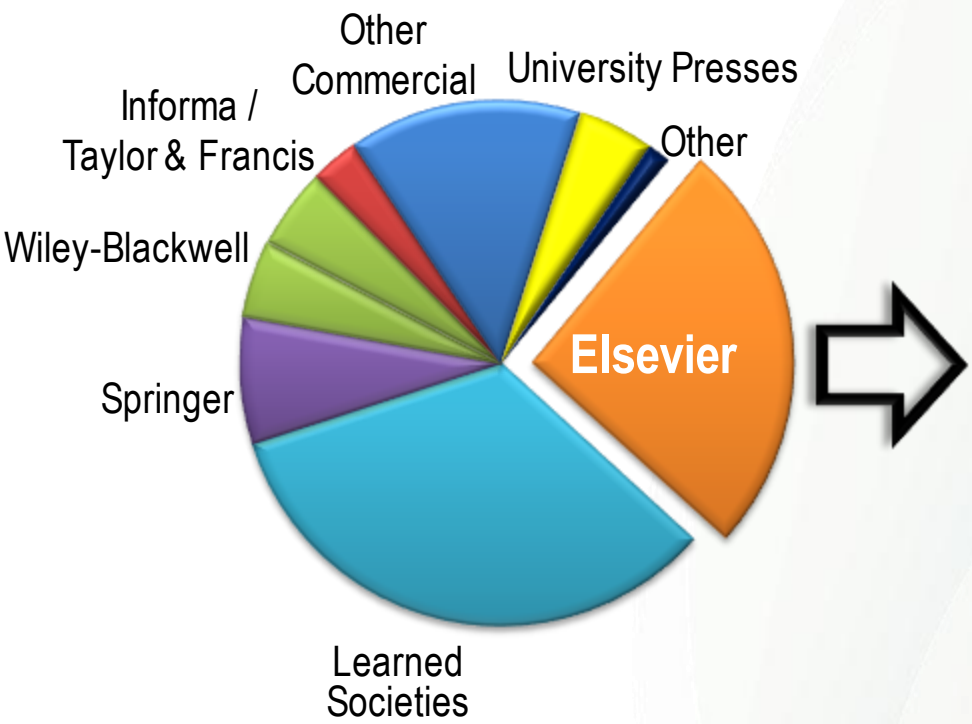
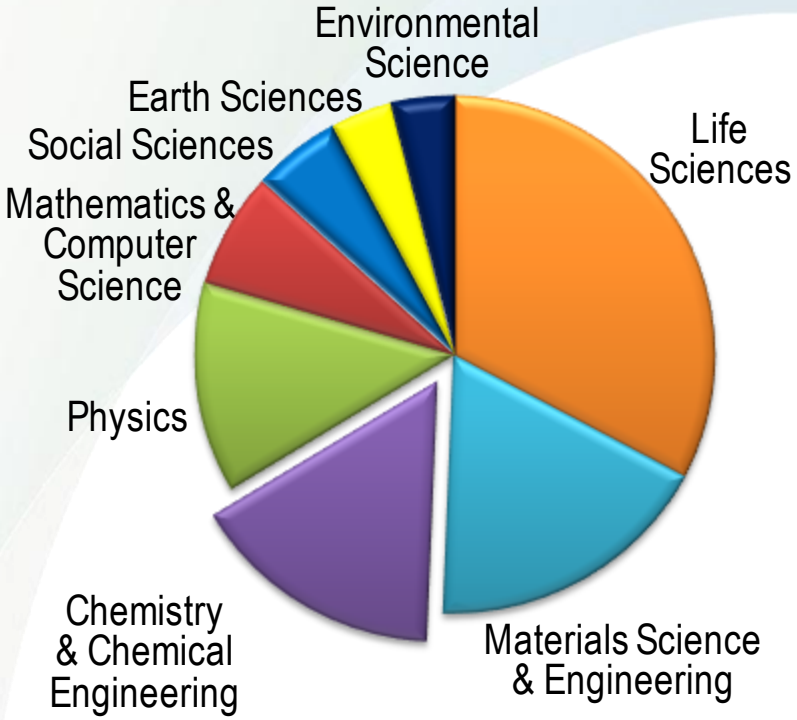
All scientific research articles




*1.2 million English language research articles published globally each year*

Elsevier – by disciplines




*250,000+ English language research articles published with Elsevier every year*

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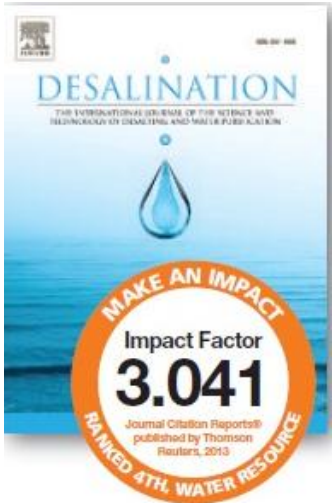



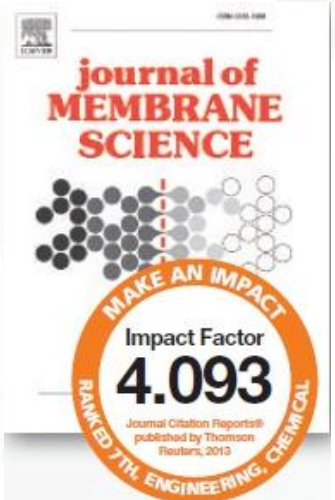


MAKE AN IMPACT!

## Elsevier publishes 15 out of the top 20 Chemical Engineering journals*

| Rank | Title | 2012 Impact Factor |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | PROGRESS IN ENERGY AND COMBUSTION SCIENCE | 15.089 |
| 2 | ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE | 11.653 |
| 3 | ANNUAL REVIEW OF CHEMICAL AND BIOMOLECULAR ENGINEERING | 7.512 |
| 4 | APPLIED CATALYSIS B-ENVIRONMENTAL | 5.825 |
| 5 | JOURNAL OF CATALYSIS | 5.787 |
| 6 | APPLIED ENERGY | 4.781 |
| 7 | JOURNAL OF MEMBRANE SCIENCE | 4.093 |
| 8 | COMBUSTION AND FLAME | 3.599 |
| 9 | DYES AND PIGMENTS | 3.532 |
| 10 | CHEMICAL ENGINEERING JOURNAL | 3.473 |
| 11 | FUEL | 3.357 |
| 12 | SEPARATION AND PURIFICATION REVIEWS | 3.154 |
| 13 | DESALINATION | 3.041 |
| 14 | CATALYSIS TODAY | 2.980 |
| 15 | SEPARATION AND PURIFICATION TECHNOLOGY | 2.894 |
| 16 | ENERGY & FUELS | 2.853 |
| 17 | FUEL PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY | 2.816 |
| 18 | AEROSOL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY | 2.780 |
| 19 | JOURNAL OF SUPERCRITICAL FLUIDS | 2.732 |
| 20 | JOURNAL OF AEROSOL SCIENCE | 2.686 |

** Ranking within ISI category: Engineering, Chemical*
*Elsevier titles shown in white*

# Elsevier's Role in Scientific Publishing

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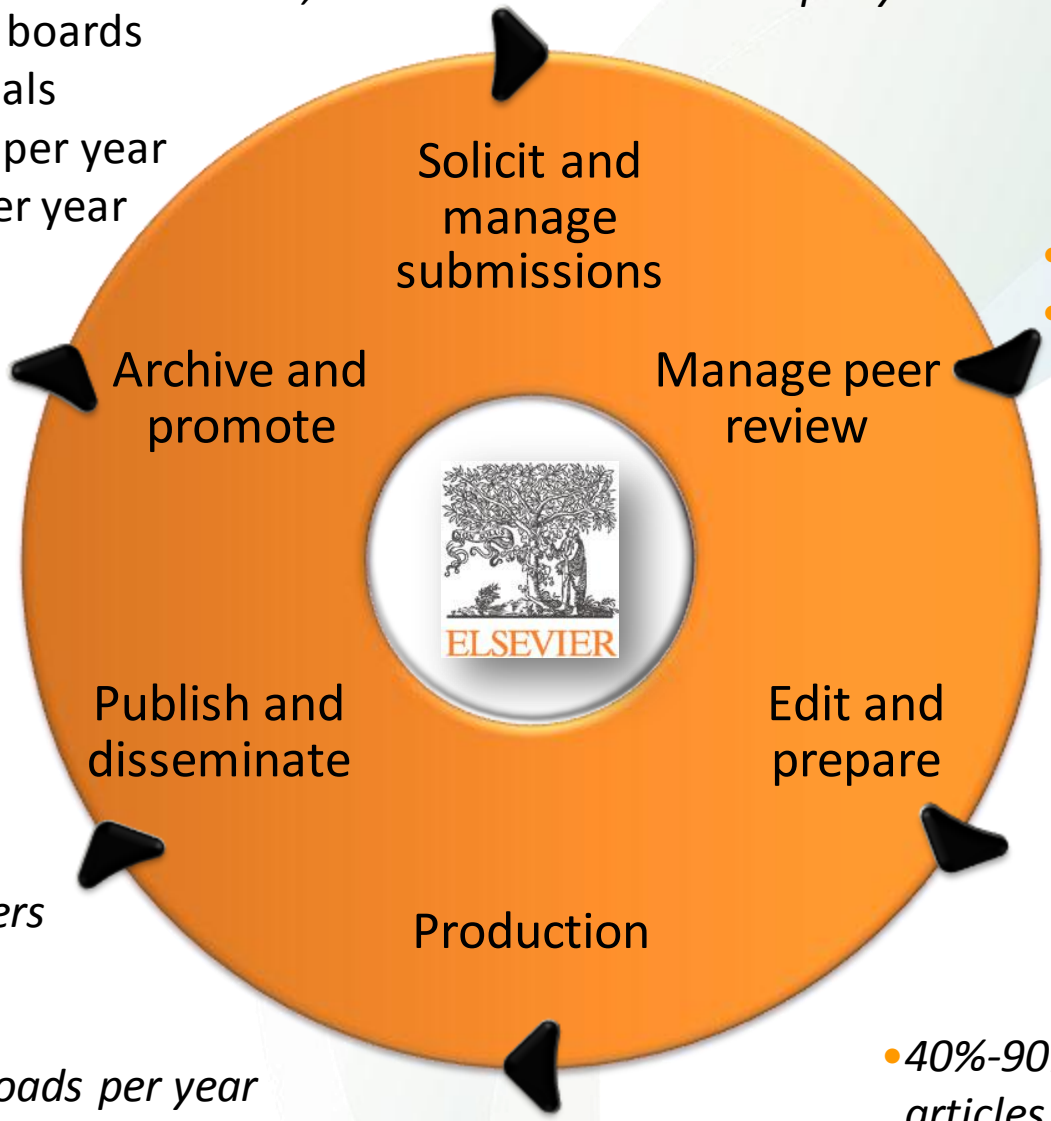
- *600,000+ article submissions per year*

- Organize editorial boards
- Launch new journals
- 1,000 new Editors per year
- 20 new journals per year




- 200,000 reviewers
- 1 million reviewer reports per year

- *11 million articles now available*
- 190 years of back issues scanned, processed and data-tagged

- 7,000 Editors
- 70,000 editorial board members
- 6.5 million author/publisher communications per year

- *11 million researchers*
- *5,000+ institutions*
- *180+ countries*
- *400 million+ downloads per year*
- 3 million print pages per year

- *40%-90% of articles rejected*

- *280,000 new articles produced per year*

# Publishers guide to writing a manuscript

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**What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?**

How can I ensure I am using proper scientific language?

How do I properly build my paper?

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## An international editor said:

**"The following problems appear much too frequently"**

- Submission of papers which are clearly out of scope
- Failure to format the paper according to the Guide for Authors
- Inappropriate (or no) suggested reviewers
- Inadequate response to reviewers
- Inadequate standard of English
- Resubmission of rejected manuscripts without revision

Paul Haddad, Editor, *Journal of Chromatography A*

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Original Research Articles

Letters or short communications

Review papers

# Decide the most appropriate type of manuscript

# Original Research Articles

- Standard for disseminating completed research findings
- Typically 8-10 pages, 5 figures, 25 references
- Draft and submit the paper to appropriate journal
- Good way to build a scientific research career

**Sample Original Research Article Titles**

**"Hydrodynamic study of a liquid/solid fluidized bed under transverse electromagnetic field"**

**"Soluble nanoparticles as removable pore templates for the preparation of polymer ultrafiltration membranes"**

**"Kinetics of pressure oxidative leaching of molybdenite concentrate by nitric acid"**

# Short Communications

- Quick and early communications of significant, original advances
- Much shorter than full articles.

**Sample Short Communications Titles**

A proposed rapid screening technique for new reverse osmosis membranes. Desalination, 285, p. 399-400 (2012)

Dispersion of particulate clusters via the rapid vaporization of interstitial liquid. Powder Technology, 215-216, p. 223-226 (2012)

# Review papers

- Critical synthesis of a specific research topic
- Typically 10+ pages, 5+ figures, 80 references
- Typically solicited by journal editors
- Good way to consolidate a scientific research career

**Sample Review Paper Titles**

**"Cross-flow microfiltration applied to oenology: A review"**

**"Boron removal from saline water: a comprehensive review"**

**"Review on solvent extraction of cadmium from various solutions"**

# Journal Selection

***It is not (only) the Impact Factor, it is (mainly) the right audience!***

Consult the Journal homepage to learn:

- Aims and scope
- Accepted types of articles
- Readership
- Current hot topics
  - go through the abstracts of recent publications

TIP: Articles in your references will likely lead you to the right journal.

DO NOT gamble by submitting your manuscript to more than one journal at a time.

# Consult the Journal Homepage

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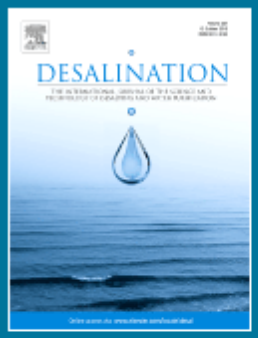


## Desalination

**The International Journal on the Science and Technology of Desalting and Water Purification**

*Desalination* is the premier international journal dedicated to communicating the latest developments in **desalination** including theoretical and applied research, technological and industrial development...

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1. **Technical review and evaluation of the economics of water desalination: Current and future challenges for better water supply sustainability**
Noreddine Ghaffour | Thomas M. Missimer | ...

2. **Nano-enhanced reverse osmosis membranes**
M.G. Buonomenna

3. **Membrane distillation: A comprehensive review**

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What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?

**How can I ensure I am using proper manuscript language?**

How do I properly build my paper?

# Why is language important?

**Save your editor and reviewers the trouble of guessing what you mean**

**Complaint from an editor:**

"[This] paper fell well below my threshold. I refuse to spend time trying to understand what the author is trying to say. Besides, I really want to send a message that they can't submit garbage to us and expect us to fix it. My rule of thumb is that if there are more than 6 grammatical errors in the abstract, then I don't waste my time carefully reading the rest."

# Language does make a difference

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"It is quite depressive to think that we are spending millions in grants for people to perform experiments, produce new knowledge, hide this knowledge in a often badly written text and then spend some more millions trying to second guess what the authors really did and found."

Amos Bairoch Nature Precedings
doi:10.1038/npre.2009.3092.1

# Do publishers correct language?

- No. It is the **author's responsibility** to make sure his paper is in its best possible form when submitted for publication

- Publishers often provide resources for authors.
  - Some publishers may perform technical screening prior to peer review.
  - http://webshop.elsevier.com/languageservices

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MORE

# Manuscript Language – Overview

Accurate

Concise

Clear

Objective

# Sentence Structure

Write direct and short sentences

One piece of information per sentence

Avoid multiple statements in one sentence

**Tip: Read your manuscript out loud when proofreading. You will pick up on more errors and run-on sentences.**

# Sentence Structure

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## An example of what NOT to do:

**"If it is the case, intravenous administration should result in that emulsion has higher intravenous administration retention concentration, but which is not in accordance with the result, and therefore the more rational interpretation should be that SLN with mean diameter of 46nm is greatly different from emulsion with mean diameter of 65 nm in entering tumor, namely, it is probably difficult for emulsion to enter and exit from tumor blood vessel as freely as SLN, which may be caused by the fact that the tumor blood vessel aperture is smaller."**

## A possible modification:

**"It was expected that the intravenous administration via emulsion would have a higher retention concentration. However, the experimental results suggest otherwise. The SLN entered the tumor blood vessel more easily than the emulsion. This may be due to the smaller aperture of the SLN (46 nm) compared with the aperture of the emulsion (65 nm)."**

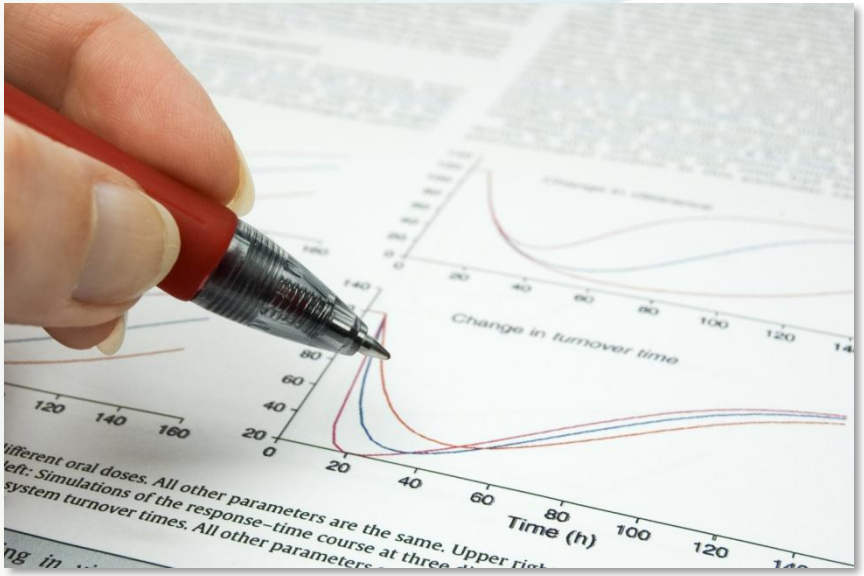
# Tenses

*Present tense:*

for known facts & hypotheses

*Past tense:*

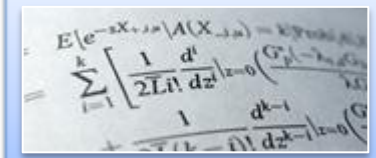
for experiments conducted & results



# Grammar

Use active voice to shorten sentences

Avoid abbreviations



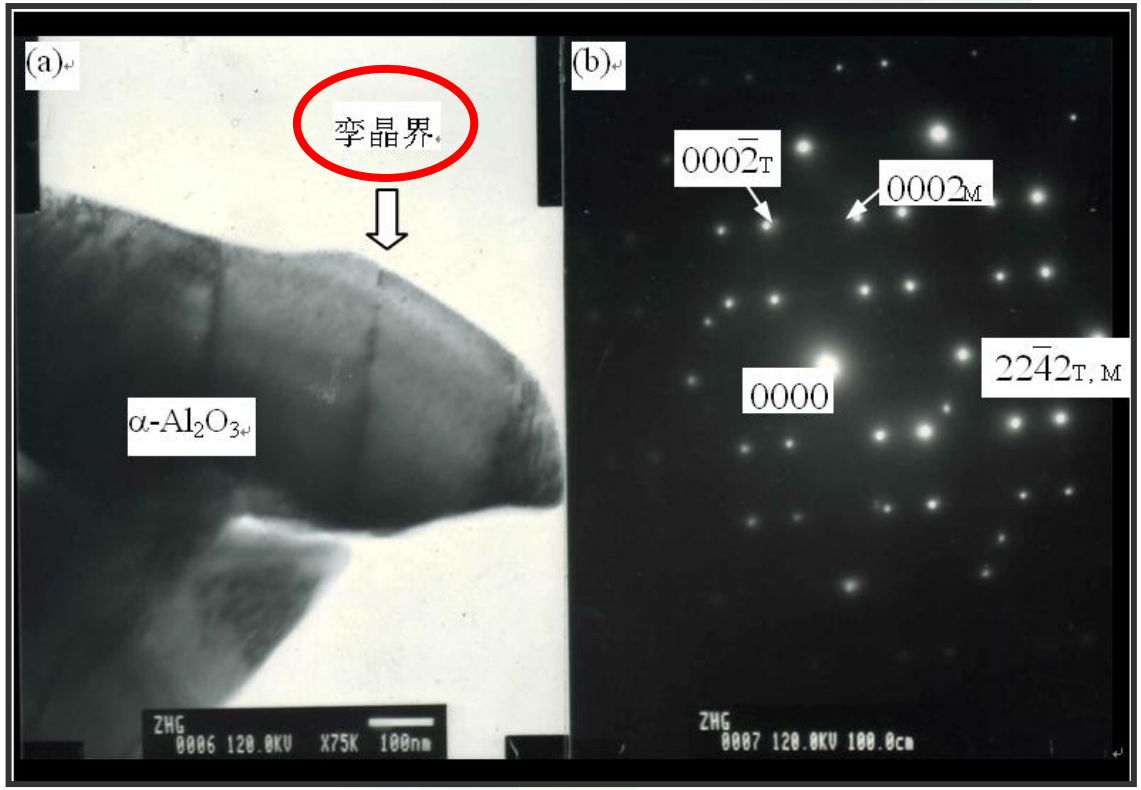
Minimize use of adverbs


Eliminate redundant phrases

Double-check unfamiliar words or phrases

# Language

**Finally, you should use English throughout the manuscript, including figures.**



What steps do I need to take before I write my paper?

How can I ensure I am using proper manuscript language?

**How do I properly build my paper?**

# Thought Questions

**What are some characteristics of the best manuscript writing you have seen?**

**What is it that distinguishes a very good manuscript from a bad one?**

# What makes up a strong manuscript?

- Has a **clear**, **useful**, and **exciting** message
- Presented and constructed in a **logical** manner
- Reviewers and editors can *easily* grasp the **significance**

**"engineers didn't sit around a campfire showing graphs. they had to tell stories."**

# Read the '*Guide for Authors*'

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- **You can find the Guide for Authors on the journal homepage on Elsevier.com**
- **Stick to the Guide for Authors in your manuscript, *even in the first draft* (text layout, nomenclature, figures & tables, references, etc.). In the end it will save you time!**


Guide for authors

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## Guide for Authors

Author information pack

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Ethics in publishing
- Conflict of interest
- Submission declaration
- Changes to authorship
- Copyright
- Role of the funding source
- Funding body agreements and policies
- Referees

PREPARATION

- Use of wordprocessing software
- Article structure
- Essential title page information
- Abstract
- Graphical abstract
- Highlights
- Abbreviations
- Tables
- References
- Video data
- AudioSlides
- Supplementary data
- Submission checklist

AFTER ACCEPTANCE

- Use of the Digital Object Identifier
- Online proof correction

# Research Article Structure

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- Title
- Abstract
- Keywords

Main text (IMRAD)

- Introduction
- Methods
- Results

and

- Discussion

- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Supplementary Data

informative, attractive, effective

*How do you search for a paper?*

Make sure each section of the paper fulfills its purpose clearly & concisely

Write in the same order you read:

- Figures and tables
- Methods, Results and Discussion
- Conclusions and Introduction
- Abstract and title

# Title

- A good title should contain the *fewest* possible words that *adequately* describe the content of a paper.
- Effective titles
  - Identify the main issue of the paper
  - Begin with the subject of the paper
  - Are accurate, unambiguous, specific, and complete
  - Are as short as possible
- Do not contain rarely-used abbreviations

# Title

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| Original Title | Revised | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| Preliminary observations on the effect of Zn element on anticorrosion of zinc plating layer | Effect of Zn on anticorrosion of zinc plating layer | Long title distracts readers. Remove all redundancies such as "observations on", "the nature of", etc. |
| Action of antibiotics on bacteria | Inhibition of growth of mycobacterium tuberculosis by streptomycin | Titles should be specific. Think to yourself: "How will I search for this piece of information?" when you design the title. |
| Fabrication of carbon/CdS coaxial nanofibers displaying optical and electrical properties via electrospinning carbon | Electrospinning of carbon/CdS coaxial nanofibers with optical and electrical properties | "English needs help. The title is nonsense. All materials have properties of all varieties. You could examine my hair for its electrical and optical properties! You MUST be specific. I haven't read the paper but I suspect there is something special about these properties, otherwise why would you be reporting them?" *– the Editor-in-chief* |

# Abstract

… is freely available in electronic abstracting & indexing services [PubMed, Medline, Embase, SciVerse Scopus, ....]

- This is the **advertisement of your article**.
- Make it interesting, and easy to be understood without reading the whole article. *What has been done? What are the main findings?*
- Follow the Rule of 10:
  - 1-2 sentences: aim
  - 2-3 sentences: materials & methods
  - 2-3 sentences: results
  - 2 sentences: discussion/conclusions

# Graphical Abstracts

- May be MANDATORY for your journal (check Guide for Authors)
- Summarize article content in a concise, pictorial form
- Submitted as a separate file in EES
- Image size: 531 x 1328 pixels (h x w) with minimum resolution 300 dpi
- Image should be readable at size of 5 x 13 cm (screen resolution 96 dpi)
- Preferred file types: TIFF, EPS, PDF, MS Office files
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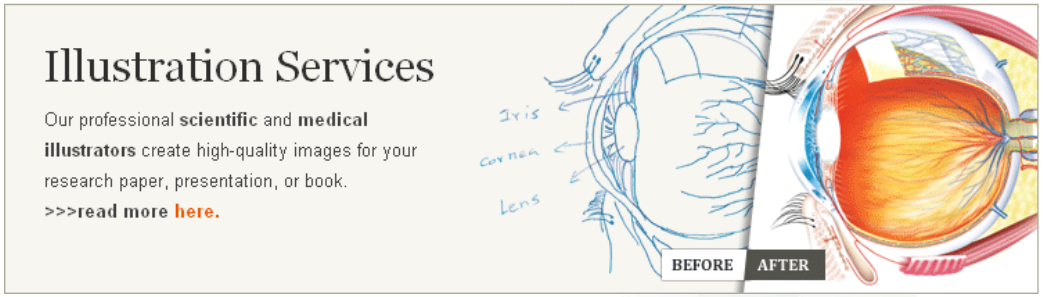


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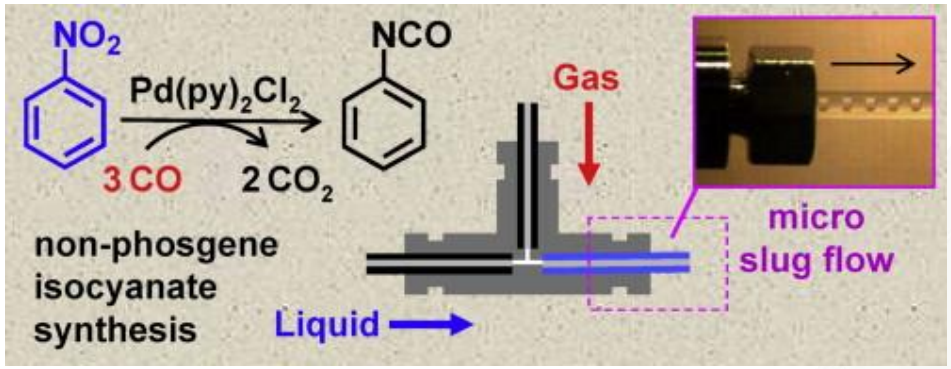
# Highlights

- May be MANDATORY for your journal (check Guide for Authors)
- 3-5 bullet points that convey the core findings of the article
- Submitted as a separate file in EES
- Maximum 85 characters (including spaces) per bullet point
- Visit http://www.elsevier.com/highlights for examples

# Examples




► Microreaction system for non-phosgene direct isocyanate synthesis was developed.

► Gas–liquid slug flow of the reactant CO gas and nitrobenzene was formed in the microchannel.

► The isocyanate yield of the microflow reaction was three to six times higher than that of the batch reaction.

► Higher isocyanate yield was obtained in a narrow-bore tube (0.5 mm i.d.) than in a wide-bore tube (1.0 mm i.d.).

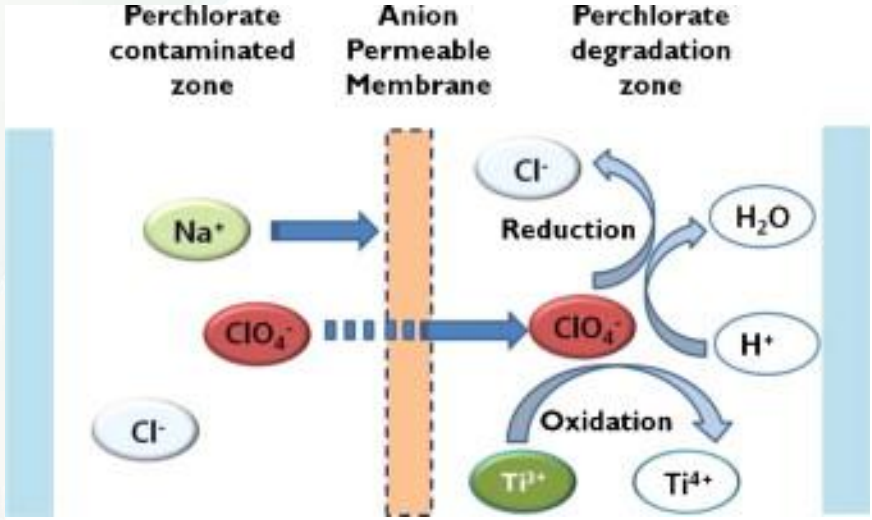
► The results were interpreted in terms of the length of the liquid slug monitored through transparent PFA tubes.

Takebayashi, et al. *Direct carbonylation of nitrobenzene to phenylisocyanate using gas-liquid slug flow in microchannel.* ***Chem. Eng. J.*** 180 (2012) 250-254

► Perchlorate can be reduced by titanium ions in solutions with high concentrations of acid.

► The TMH system separates a degradation zone that contains Ti(III) from a contaminated zoned that contains perchlorate.

► The model successfully described adsorption, diffusion and reduction of perchlorate in the system.




S.H. Park, et al. *Perchlorate degradation using a titanium and membrane hybrid (TMH) system: Transport, adsorption, chemical reaction* ***J. Membr. Sci.*** 390-391 (2012) 84-92

# Introduction

**Introduction is especially important!**

**A high proportion of "lack of novelty" rejections are made after reading abstract, introduction and conclusions.**

- You are telling a story. Introduction sets the scenario.
- Do not attempt to summarize the whole field (it is not possible!)
- Quote what is necessary for background and to give credit to previous works. Do not add superfluous references.
  - Editors may choose reviewers from cited work

# Introduction (Continued)

- Give a clear **motivation** for the work. *Explain why before explaining how.*
- Explain what is **novel** *compared to* what is already available in the *literature*
- High level description of your approach. Why is it *important*? Why is it *difficult*?
- What are the *alternatives*? Why is yours **different** or **better**?
- What are the gaps and how are you going to fill them? *What is your "**silver bullet**"?*
- At the end of the introduction the *reader knows* the *problem* and maybe the *solution you propose*

# Methods

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***Describe how the problem was studied***

- Include detailed information. The reader should be able to reproduce the experiment.
- Previously published procedures need not be described in depth:
  - Cite methods and note any changes to the protocol and/or
  - Provide detailed methods in Supplemental Material
- Identify the equipment and materials used
  - Provide source and related product information (company, molec. weight, etc.)
- Write out full chemical/biological compound names (followed by abbr.) then use abbreviations throughout paper
  - Make sure that all symbols are defined.

# Results

- You are telling a story. Keep the narrative flowing, concise, well organized.
  - The main findings
    - **Analytical description** of data from experiments described in the Methods section.
    - Findings/data of secondary importance should be captured in Supplementary Materials
    - **Minimal *interpretation* of results and/or *comparison* with literature unless the journal combines the Results and Discussion sections**
  - Results of the statistical analysis
  - Figures and tables

# Results: figures and tables

- Illustrations are critical because
  - Figures and tables are the most efficient way to present results and
  - Results should be presented in a non-redundant way
- Captions and legends should be self-explanatory; figures should be able to stand alone
  - *What is the take home point?*
- Maximize space; make sure final versions of figures can be easily read (watch use of legends)
- Use consistent formatting between figures
  - Plots: labels, scale and symbols
  - Micrographs: scale bar, point out key features

Hussain, et al. *Synthesis, characterization and photocatalytic application of TiO2 nanoparticles.* ***Chem. Eng. J.*** 157 (2010) 45-51

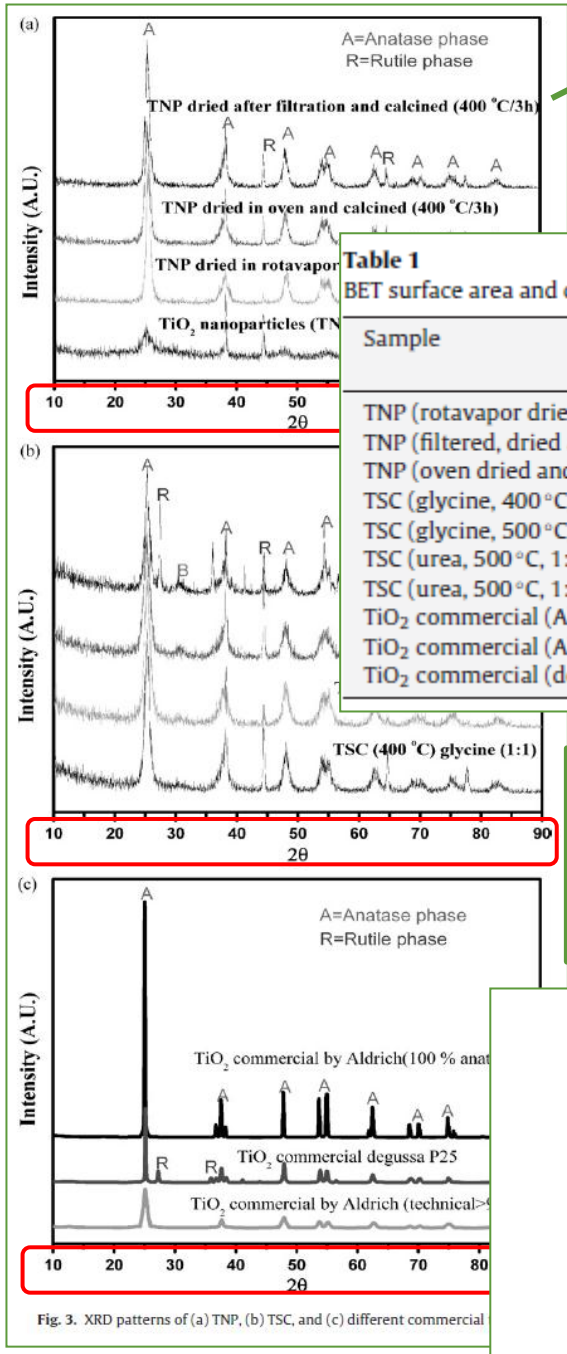



**Table 1**
BET surface area and crystalline phases of different $TiO_2$.

| Sample | $S_{BET}$ ($m^2/g$) | Anatase:rutile (%) |
|---|---|---|
| TNP (rotavapor dried and calcined) | 151 | 80:20 |
| TNP (filtered, dried and calcined) | 130 | 71:29 |
| TNP (oven dried and calcined) | 121 | 69:31 |
| TSC (glycine, 400 °C, 1:1) | 85 | 55:45 |
| TSC (glycine, 500 °C, 1:1) | 90 | 60:40 |
| TSC (urea, 500 °C, 1:3) | 108 | 61:39 |
| TSC (urea, 500 °C, 1:1) | 65 | 58:42 |
| $TiO_2$ commercial (Aldrich, technical) | 15 | 80:20 |
| $TiO_2$ commercial (Aldrich, anatase) | 10 | 100:0 |
| $TiO_2$ commercial (degussa P25) | 53 | 70:30 |

Koga and Kitaoka. *One-step synthesis of gold nanocatalysts on a microstructured paper matrix for the reduction of 4-nitrophenol.* ***Chem. Eng. J.*** 168 (2011) 420-425

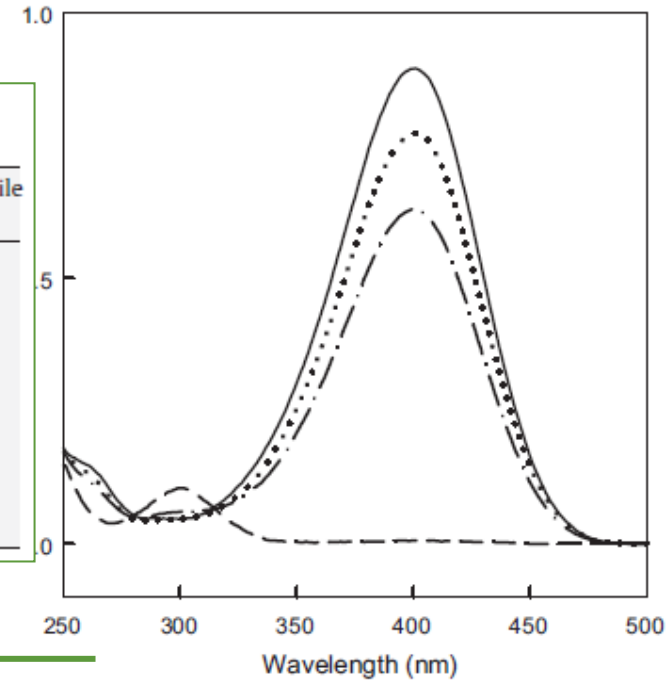



**Fig. 6.** UV–vis absorption spectra for the reduction of 4-NP to 4-AP: unreacted 4-NP (solid line), AuNPs@ZnO paper (dashed line), AuNPs@ZnO whiskers (dashed and dotted line) and Au/ZnO powders (dotted line). The reaction was carried out for 10 min under static condition. 4-NP: 1.5 μmol, $NaBH_4$: 1.5 mmol, Au: 5.0 μmol.

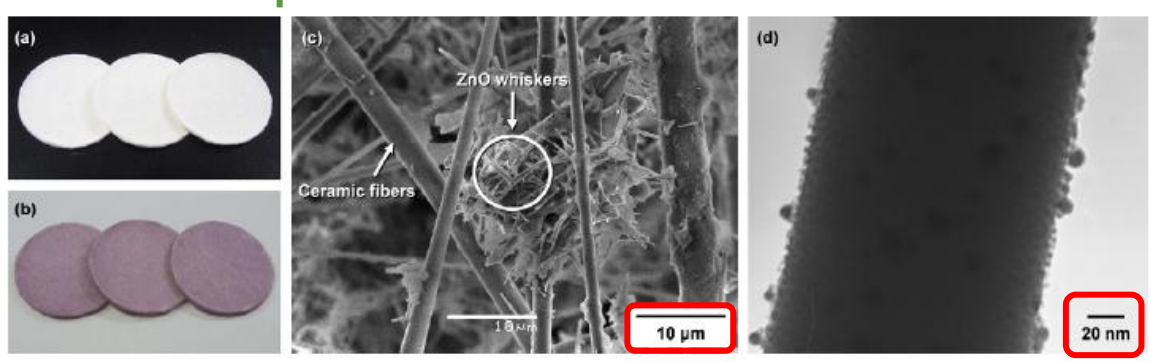
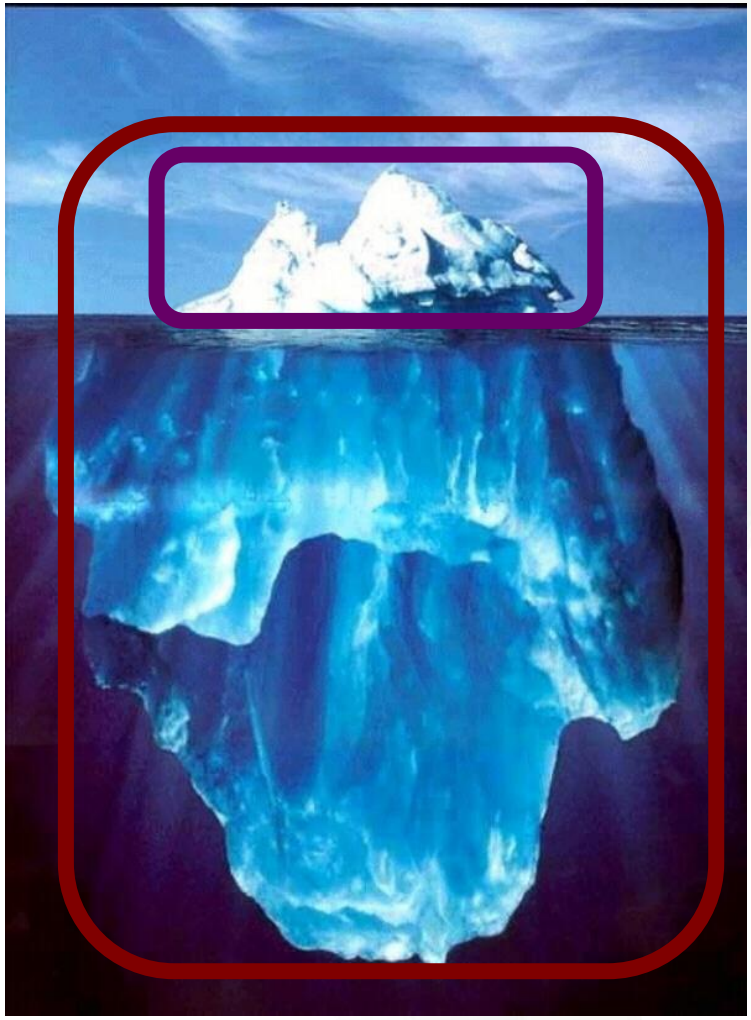



**Fig. 1.** Optical images of ZnO paper (a) and $HAuCl_4$-treated ZnO paper (b), SEM image of $HAuCl_4$-treated ZnO paper (c) and TEM image of ZnO whiskers picked up from $HAuCl_4$-treated ZnO paper (d). The size of each paper composite was $8 \times 10^2$ $mm^2$.

# Results

## *Do not try to fit everything in!*



**What ends up in the paper**

**Your work**

**Slide contributed by Diego Gutierrez**

# Discussion

- **Critical interpretation of the results**
  - Make the Discussion correspond to the Results
  - Be rigorous. Do not make statements that are not supported by your data.
  - Compare your results to published results

- Significance & Implications
  - How does your data **relate** to the "**big picture**" / applications?
  - Can you **identify a mechanism** or form new hypotheses?

# Conclusions

***How the work advances the field from the present state of knowledge***

- Not the same as a summary!
- Give conclusions that are supported by your results
- Try to end in a positive tone
- Do not overreach. Statements such as "this method can potentially be used…" do not belong to the conclusions (and often irritate referees)

# References

***Cite the main scientific publications on which your work is based***

Do not use too many references

Always ensure you have fully absorbed material you are referencing

Avoid excessive self-citations

Avoid excessive citations of publications from the same region

Conform strictly to the style given in the guide for authors

# Acknowledgments

***Ensures those who helped in the research are recognised***

Advisors and Undergrad. Support

Financial Supporters and Funding Bodies

Proofreaders and Typists

Suppliers who may have donated materials

**Acknowledgments**

# Authorship

- Policies to address authorship can vary
- The **International Committee of Medical Journal Editors** (aka Vancouver Group) declared that an author must:
  1. **substantially contribute** to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
  2. **draft** the article or **revise** it critically for important intellectual content; and
  3. **give their approval** of the final version to be published.
  4. **ALL 3 conditions** must be fulfilled to be an author!
- Any other contributors only need to be acknowledged.

# Authorship

## General principles for who is listed first

- **First Author**
  - Generally conducts and/or supervises data generation
  - Sometimes puts paper together and submits to journal
- **Corresponding author**
  - The first author or a senior author from the institution. Considered “main responsible” for the contents (but responsibility is shared!)
  - Sometimes puts paper together and submits to journal

# Authorship

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## Avoid

- **Ghost Authorship**
  - leaving out authors who should be included
- **Gift Authorship**
  - including authors who did not significantly contribute
- **Spelling names:** Be consistent!

***Ensure all authors are aware of manuscript and offer opportunity to provide edits.***

# Now that you *think* you have finished…

- Read the paper again and circulate to all co-authors. Be critical yourself and accept criticism from others.
- Advisors
- Try to be in the position of a reader/reviewer.
  - Forget what you know, read only what is written. Yes, it is difficult. Just keep trying.
- If possible, have someone else you trust to comment on the paper.
  - If you need to explain something verbally, then you probably need to rewrite that part.

# Cover Letter

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***Very important:***
***Your chance to speak directly to the editor***

- Often overlooked by authors and filled cursorily (a big mistake!).
- You have spent months working in your paper. Do not hurry up now!
- Explain the main findings and motivation
- Highlight the novelty and significance of results
- State final approval of all co-authors
- State prior reviews, revisions, etc.
- Note special requirements
  - Referees: experts, not collaborators
- *State any conflicts of interest*

# Cover Letter

Professor H. D. Schmidt
School of Science and Engineering
Northeast State University
College Park, MI 10000
USA

January 1, 2008

Dear Professor Schmidt,

Enclosed with this letter you will find en electronic submission of a manu
entitled "Mechano-sorptive creep under compressive loading – a microm
model" by John Smith and myself. This is an original paper which neither
previously nor simultaneously in whole or in part been submitted anywhere else.
Both authors have read and approved the final version submitted.

Mechano-sorptive is sometimes denoted as accelerated creep. It has been
experimentally observed that the creep of paper accelerates if it is subjected to a
cyclic moisture content. This is of large practical importance for the paper industry.
The present manuscript describes a micromechanical model on the fibre networ
level that is able to capture the experimentally observed behaviour. In particular, th
difference between mechano-sorptive creep in tension and compression is analyse
John Smith is a PhD-student who within a year will present his doctoral thesis. T
present paper will be a part of that thesis.

Three potential independent reviewers who have excellent expertise in the
this paper are:

Dr. Fernandez, Tennessee Tech, email1@university.com
Dr. Chen, University of Maine, email2@university.com
Dr. Singh, Colorado School of Mines, email3@university.com

I would very much appreciate if you would consider the manuscript for publication in
the *International Journal of Science*.

rely yours,

A. Professor

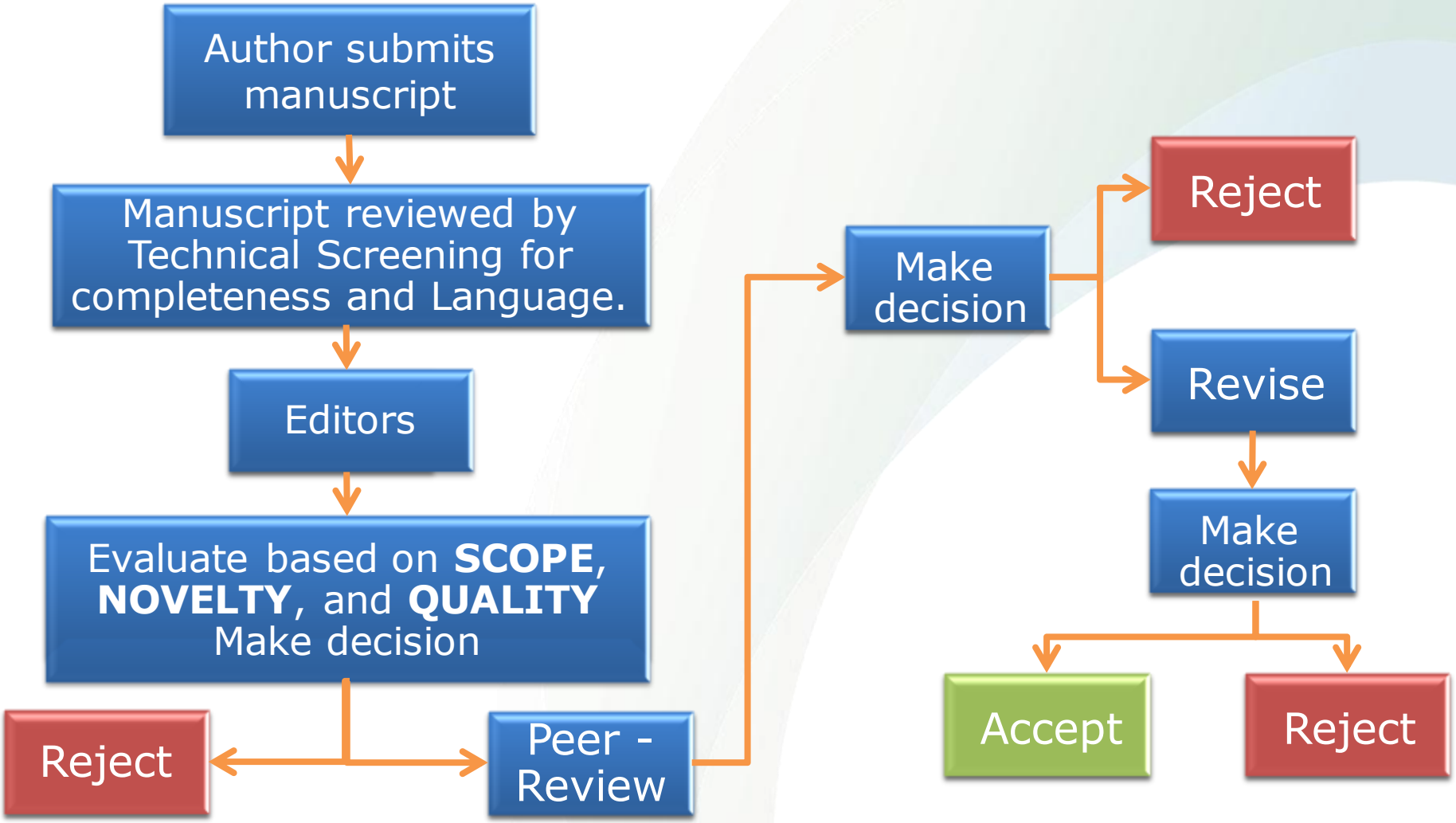
**Final approval from all authors**

**Explanation of importance of research**

**Suggested reviewers**

# What exactly happens after I submit my paper?

# General Editorial Workflow



# Peer-Review

- Minor Revision
  - Good job. Just do what you are told and resubmit quickly.
- Rejection
  - It may be disappointing, but most of the times reviewers are right (and yes, they did understand the paper; and no, they are not biased against you)
  - If you think you have been unfairly treated you may appeal. But this should be exceptional.

# Peer-Review

- Major Revision
  - Major is “major.” Take it very seriously.
  - Answer all the comments received, one by one, explaining the changes made to the manuscript in response to the remarks (or the reason why a modification is not required).
  - Go straight to the point. Refer to what the comment is about, and not something else.
  - If you feel a remark is not justified or a request is unreasonable, say so, but substantiate your response.
  - If in doubt, the Editor is likely to send it back to the referees.
  - Submit a revised version where the changes have been highlighted.

# After acceptance

- Be diligent with any last minute requests (e.g. quality of figures, format adjustments).

- Return the proofs quickly. But make sure you revise them thoroughly (it is your *last chance* to correct any mistakes before your manuscript is published)

# What leads to acceptance???

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**A**ttention to details
**C**heck and double check your work
**C**onsider the reviewers' comments
**E**nglish must be as good as possible
**P**resentation is important
**T**ake your time with revision
**A**cknowledge those who have helped you
**N**ew, original and previously unpublished
**C**ritically evaluate your own manuscript
**E**thical rules must be obeyed

Nigel John Cook
Editor-in-Chief, *Ore Geology Reviews*

# Thank you

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