

# Responding and communicating effectively with editors and reviewers

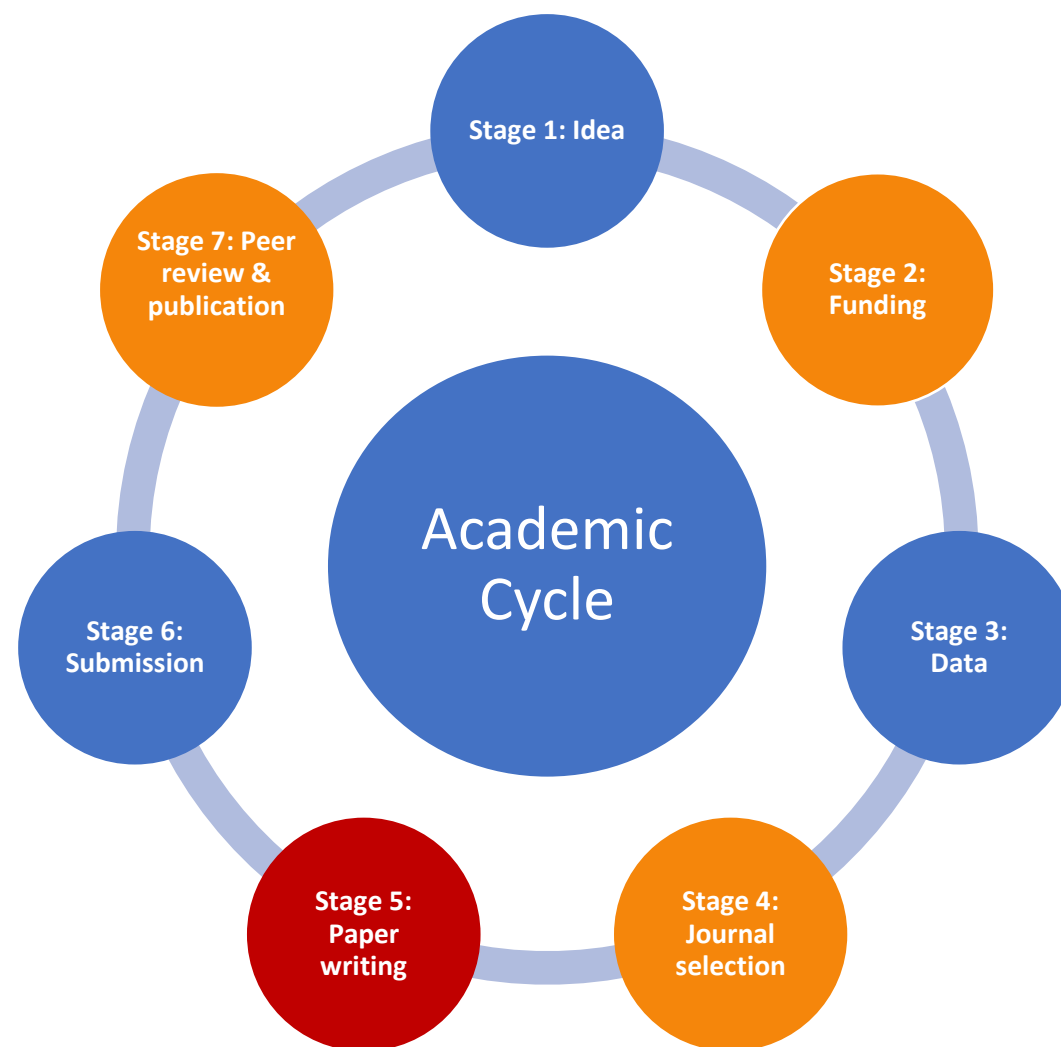


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# The academic publishing cycle



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# English academic communication



Dear Sir,

Many thanks for asking whether we would like to publish your paper.

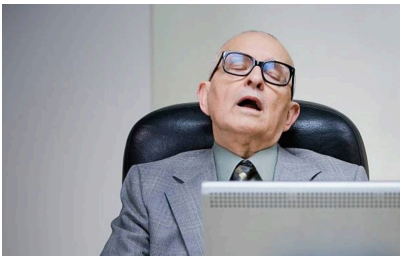
Your paper is **good** and **original**, but unfortunately we are simply not willing to publish it.

The trouble is that the **good bits were not original and the original bits were not good.**

Yours faithfully,

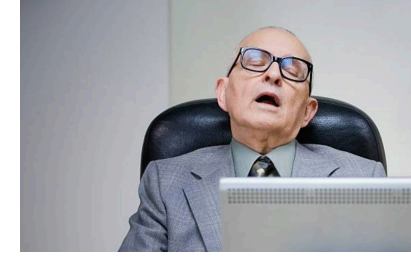
The Editors





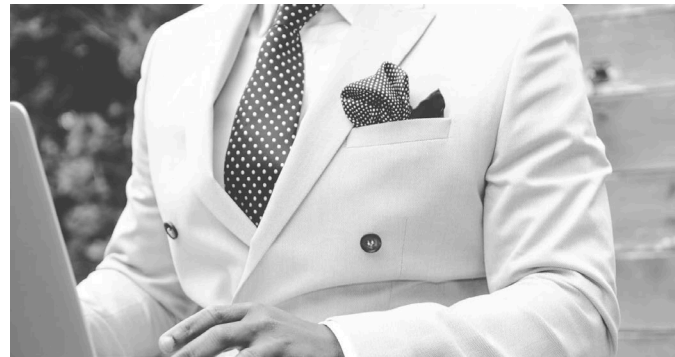
# Editors, Editors, and You

## A handy field guide for academic publishing



### Journal Managing Editor

Role: Provide 'business perspective'  
Natural Habitat: Corporate office  
Subject understanding: Often zero



### Academic editor

Role: Control journal content  
Natural Habitat: University  
Subject understanding: Deep

### Language editor

Role: Edit the English  
Natural Habitat: At home  
Subject understanding: Deep



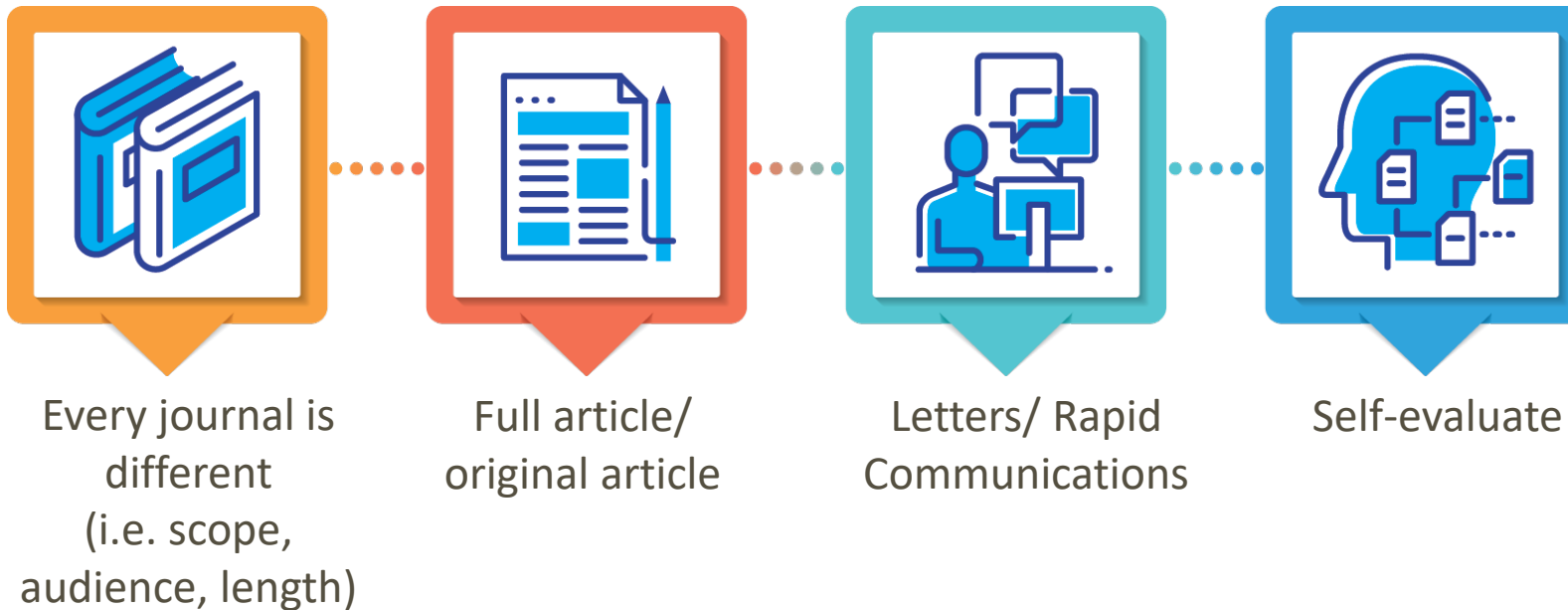
### You: The author

**We can help you crack the system**  
**Effective communication is key to hack academic publishing**

# Journal selection

Target journal

*"I never start to write until I have decided on a target journal"*



Talk to others/ colleagues/ make pre-submission enquiries

# Presubmission enquiries: Journal selection



## **Be effective & save valuable time**

Journal selection and the use of preprint servers  
Look at the journals international colleagues use for their  
submissions

A ranked list of 5-10 key journals in your field

Aim high, but  
Choose appropriately

Our three rules for journal selection: The NJE pirate code  
Not really rules, more like guidelines

No limit to the number of presubmission enquiry emails  
you can send to editors  
You commit to nothing

# Expediting the process: Our insider recommendations

## Pre-submission enquiries

Write to editors

Write to as many as you like

Select a target journal effectively

Reach out: Abstract and Title

We will provide you with an email  
template after the webinar



# Pre-submission enquiries

Why not? You have nothing to lose!

Why not write to a number of target journals?

<<Put the journal title here>>

Dear xxx Editors:

We are considering submitting a manuscript to xxx that is currently titled "xxx". I have included the working abstract of our article below.

Our study identifies xxx. We have been able to show that xxx. We therefore feel that our paper should be of interest to the readership of xxx.

I'm writing to make a presubmission enquiry about the submission of this article to xx because I am an active researcher and therefore need to ensure that my paper is reviewed and hopefully published as fast as possible. Would it be possible for you to tell me whether, or not, you are interested in receiving this submission for consideration in xx? We feel that our work falls within the scope of the journal and would be of considerable interest to your readership.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration of this presubmission enquiry. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

<Your academic address here>

**Author**

Add journal name here.

**Author**

Add journal name here.

**Author**

Add paper working title here

**Author**

Add main conclusion of the work here. One sentence.

**Author**

Add text here that explains WHY the paper is important and interesting to the readers of THIS journal.

**Author**

Add journal name here.

**Author**

Add journal name here.

**Author**

Add journal name here.



# Expediting the process: Our insider recommendations



## Preprint servers: Are they worth using?

### What are they?

- ✓ Online repositories for academic work
- ✓ Before peer review and online publication
- ✓ Corrections from 'the community' can significantly improve quality



#### Don't worry:

Your priority and author intellectual property are protected by a Creative Commons License

### Advantages

- ✓ Work can be shared very fast with other interested researchers
- ✓ Peer review can happen fast and open (if appropriate)
- ✓ Journals can select articles

# Expediting the process: Our insider recommendations

What are preprints?

Author concerns: Copyright, priority (don't worry: CC licenses)

What are CC licenses?

What do the different kinds of CC licenses mean?

Journals select from preprint servers

Full, open peer review

We will give you a comprehensive guide to preprints after the webinar

Is this a good idea?



# The first step of article submission: Editorial triage

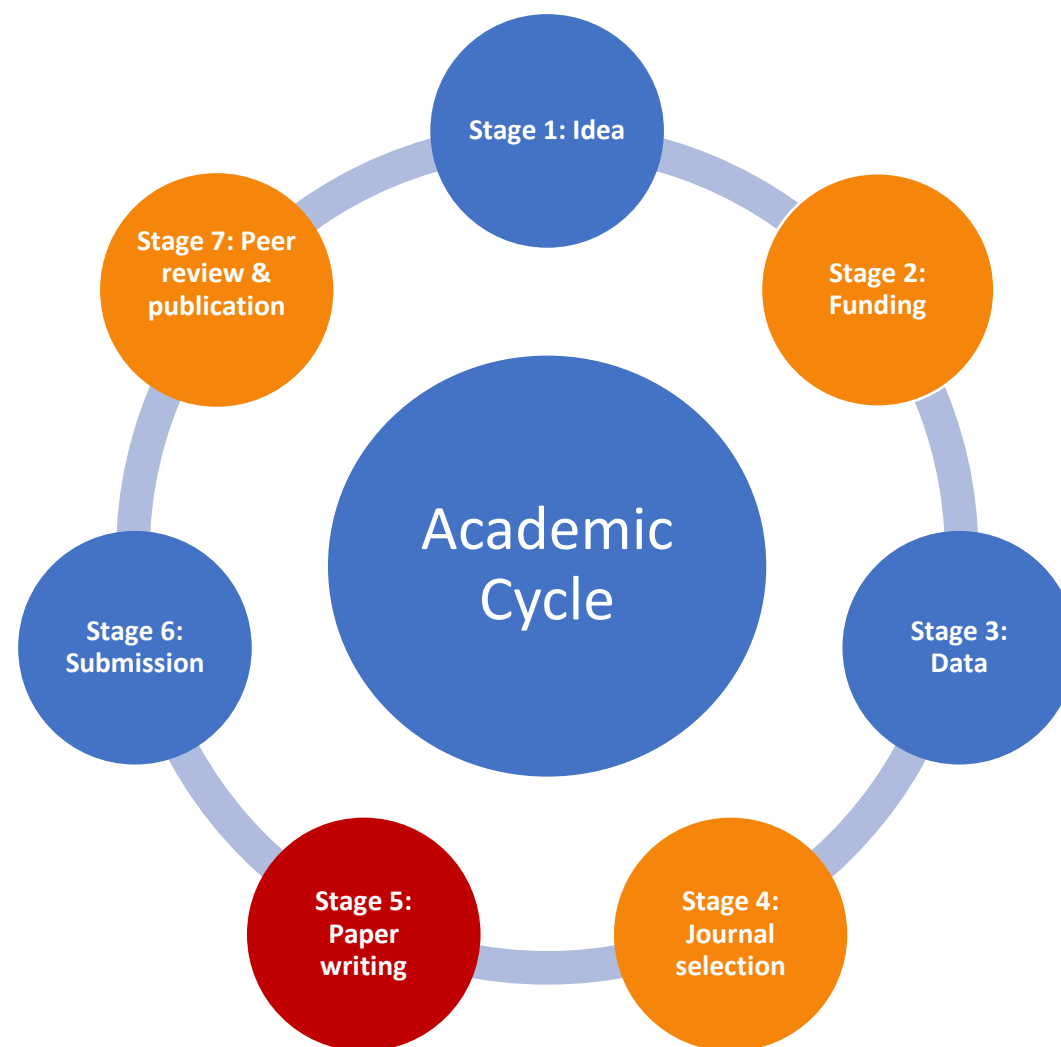
Criteria considered by “desk editors” at journals:

- Does it fit with the journal scope?
- Does this article have a clear message?
- Is it original?
- Is it important?
- Is it true? and ...
- **Is it relevant to our readers?**

You have to “sell yourself” to get through triage

High Impact Factor journals *want* to maintain high rejection rates  
9/10 papers sent to *Nature* and *Science* get rejected *before* peer review

# The academic publishing cycle



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# Writing a great cover letter

## **The cover letter is crucial**

Don't waste the opportunity to “sell” your work

Don't write something dull or derivative

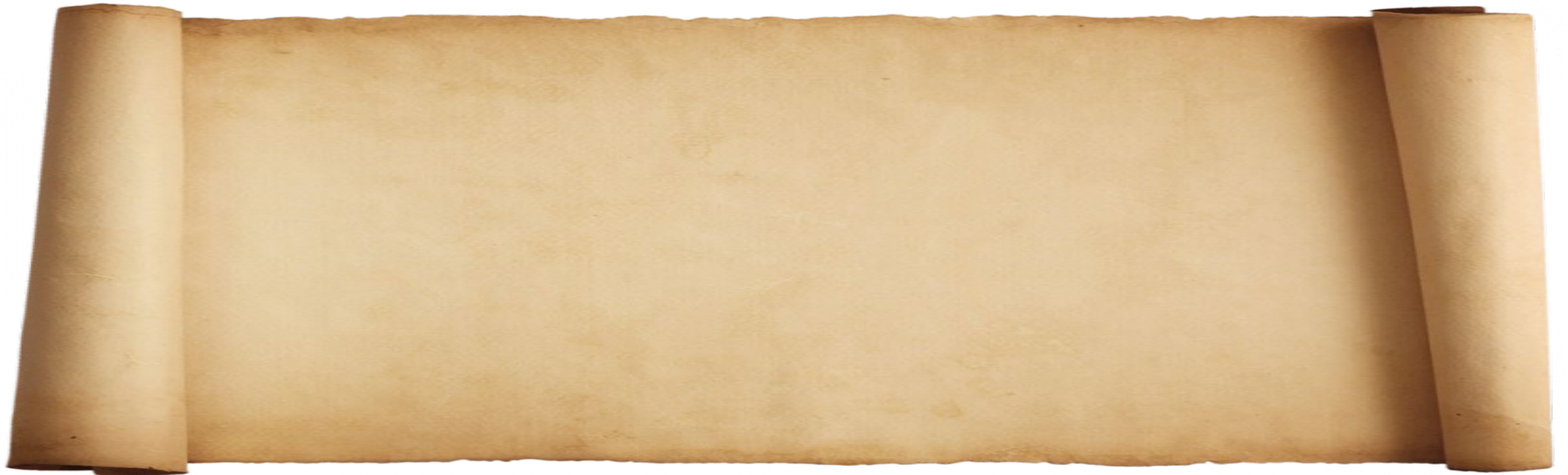
“Please consider this manuscript for publication in your esteemed  
journal”

Do tell the editor why they should take your work seriously



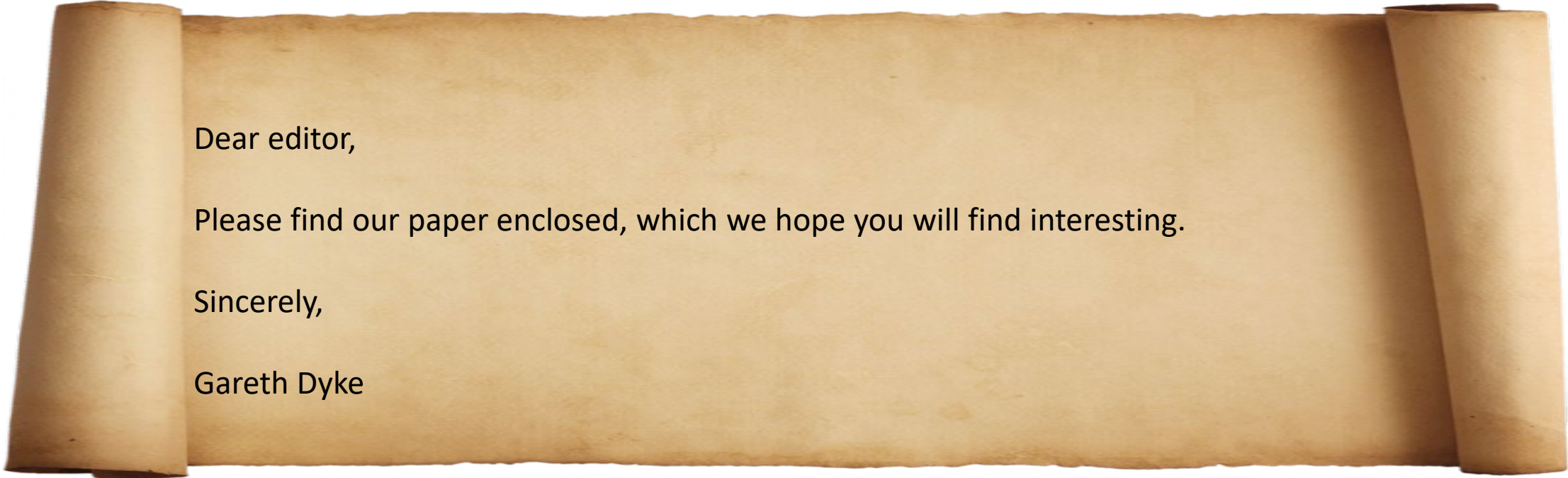
Writing a great cover letter

**The worst kind of cover letter**



# Writing a great cover letter

## **The (almost) worst kind of cover letter**



Dear editor,

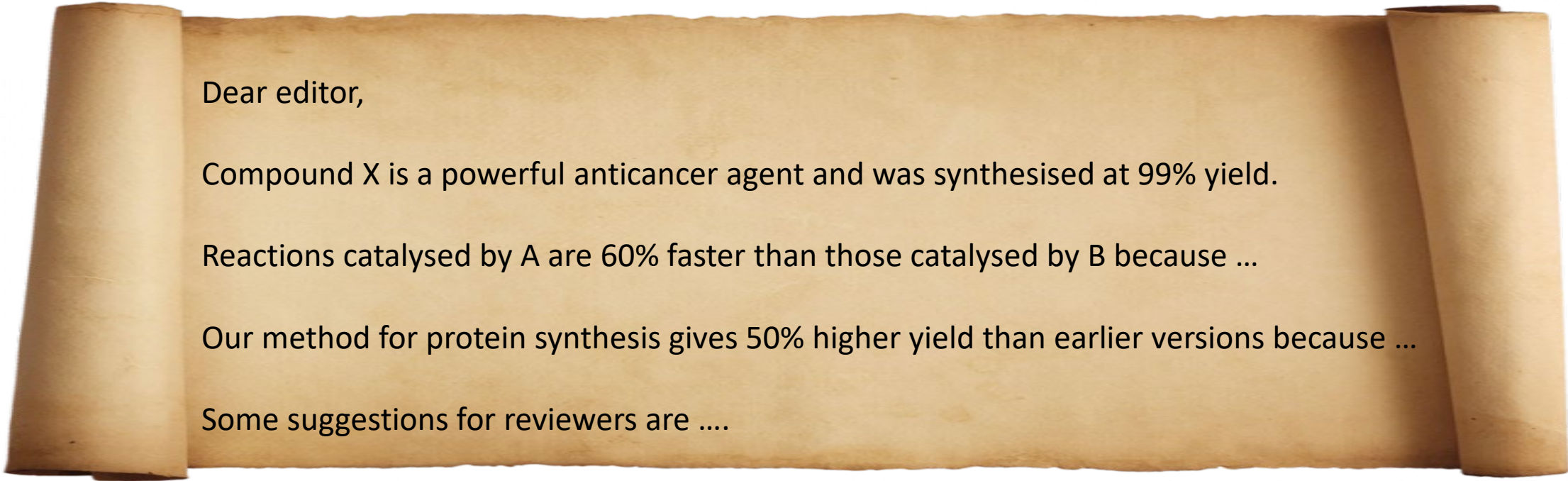
Please find our paper enclosed, which we hope you will find interesting.

Sincerely,

Gareth Dyke

# Writing a great cover letter

## **Attention editor!**



Dear editor,

Compound X is a powerful anticancer agent and was synthesised at 99% yield.

Reactions catalysed by A are 60% faster than those catalysed by B because ...

Our method for protein synthesis gives 50% higher yield than earlier versions because ...

Some suggestions for reviewers are ....

# Writing a great cover letter

## **Maximise your chances of success**

**This is one of the first sections of the paper an editor will read, so make it count:**

Why is the topic important?

Why are the results significant?

What is the *key* result? (the breakthrough)

Why is this an advance on previous work?

Why are you submitting to this journal?

Provide reviewer suggestions

[Date of submission]

[Add the name of your journal editor here]

[Add the address here]

[Journal name]

# Cover letter

RE: Manuscript ~~xxxx~~ (insert current manuscript number if this is a re-submission)

Dear Editor:

I would like to submit an original paper for publication in [ ] entitled "[ ]". Our paper was coauthored by [ ]

Our study is important because it ~~xxxx~~

We believe that our work will be of interest to the wider of your journal because ~~xxx~~. We are excited to have the chance to publish our work in your journal.

The following individuals would be appropriate as potential referees of this work, [ ]

This manuscript has not been published or presented elsewhere either in part or in entirety and is not under consideration by another journal. We have read the journal policies. [There are no conflicts of interest to declare.]

Thank you for your time with our work. [I/we] look forward to hearing from you; please get in touch if I/we are able to provide any further information about our work.

I/we will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your affiliation(s)]

[Postal address]

[Email address]

We will provide you with an email template after the webinar

**Author**

Insert title here.

**Author**

Delete if this is not a resubmission.

**Author**

Insert the journal name in italics.

**Author**

Add the Title of your paper here.

Don't forget to put time into selecting this, working with co-authors.

**Author**

Provide the names of all authors except for the corresponding author. If the corresponding author is the only author, **delete this sentence.**

This entire sentence can be removed.

**Author**

Insert statement of significance here. What is your take home message? Why is your study important? What do you want readers to get out of your work?

**Author**

WHY did you choose to send this paper to this journal? Why should this particular target audience find this paper interesting.

**Author**

Names and email addresses. At least four.

**Author**

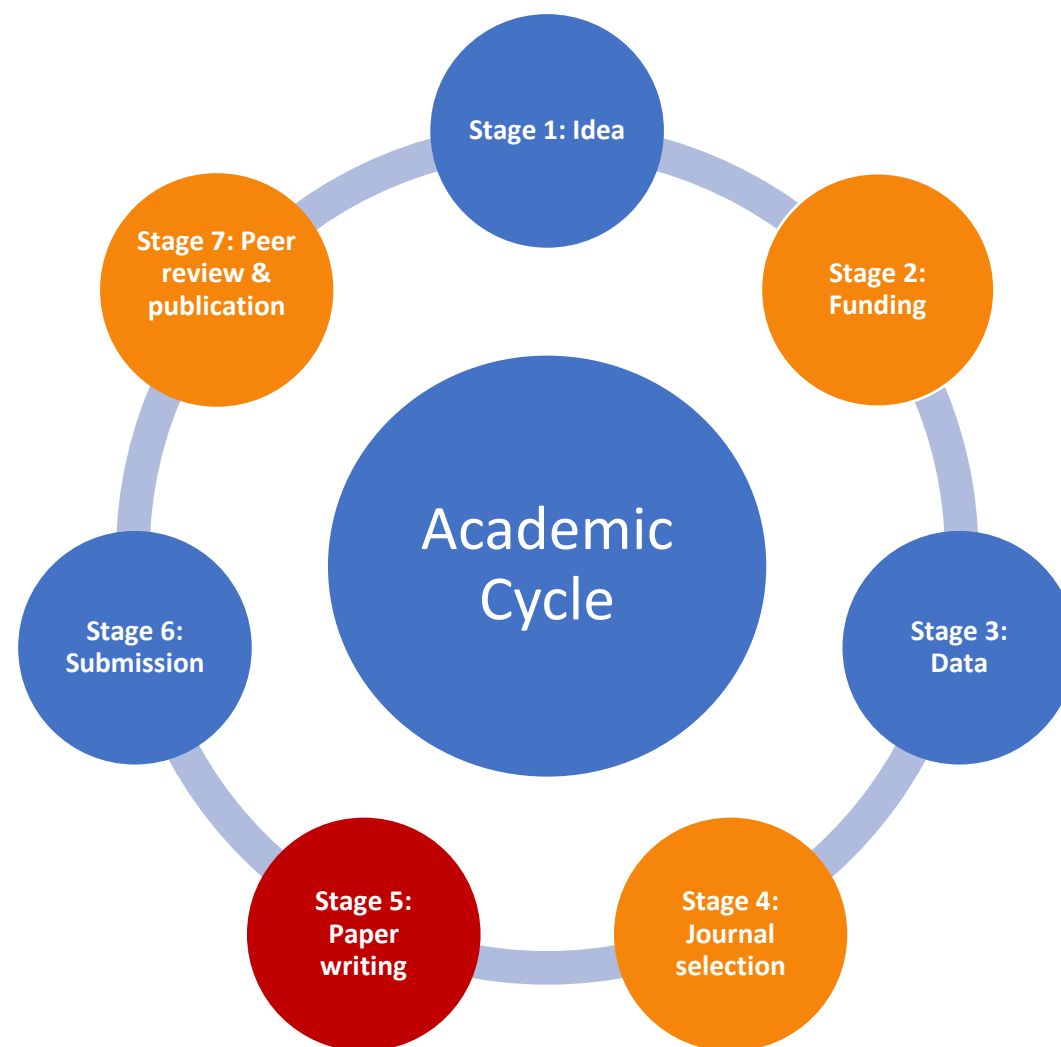
If conflicts of interest need to be declared separately, replace this sentence with the following one: "Details about competing interests are provided separately."

**Author**

Delete as appropriate.



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# Review responses

## ***Tips for Responding to Reviewers' Comments—from an Editor's or Reviewer's Points of View***

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### **Once reviewed: Comments will determine likely acceptance**

Minor versus Major revisions

Major → Back to the same reviewers

Minor → Decision made by the editor

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### **How to respond?**

Be comprehensive, show your editor you take this process seriously

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### **Materials you need for re-submission**

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***Perseverance*** will be key to success

# Review responses

Make sure editors and peer reviewers *feel good* about your responses.  
If they feel good, they are more likely to give your article a positive review.

## Good and Bad Sentence Starters for Responding Reviewers' Comments

Good example	Bad example
We would like to thank the reviewer for the interest on this topic...	I do not think the reviewers understand my point...
The Reviewer has correctly pointed out that...	It would not necessary to change according to the reviewers' suggestion because...
We acknowledge that..., yet...	We simply do not have such data...
We concur with the Reviewer that...; nonetheless...	Repeating the experiences/analysis would not actually change our conclusion...

'Thank you for the valuable comments'

'This valuable insight is much appreciated'

'These comments significantly enhanced the quality of our work'

# How can you manage the process?

## Effectively responding to review comments: Tips and tricks

### **Response to reviews (= editorial summary)**

We would like to thank the two peer reviewers who worked on our paper for their considerable efforts and for the time they devoted to our work. We have made almost all the changes requested and enclose a revised manuscript version (changes to our paper can be seen **in red** in the main document and figure captions). Our responses to comments received in review are summarised in this document, interleaved **in red**.

### **Reviewer #1**

In my opinion, the main issue with this paper is that all the analyses should be repeated using a probability-based approach.

**We would like to thank Reviewer #1 for this insightful and accurate comment. We have re-worked all our analyses, as requested.**

Please use American English spelling throughout (e.g., color not colour).

**Thank you for this editorial comment. We have corrected our paper throughout.**

# Responses to revisions

[Date of letter]

[Add the name of your journal editor here]

[Add the address here]

[Journal name]

RE: Manuscript xxxx (insert current manuscript number if this is a re-submission)

Dear Editor:

I'm writing to thank you very much for returning to us the reviews of our manuscript, xxxx. This paper was submitted to your journal on the xxxx. At this stage, we would like to thank both you and the xx reviewers for spending time to work on our paper. We very much appreciate all of the comments received in review.

We/I have accepted all/almost all/a substantial proportion of the comments made on our work. The changes we have made to our paper are summarised in this letter (below) and are clear in the revised version as 'tracked changes'/coloured text.

We/I now feel that this paper has been substantially improved and should now be acceptable for publication in xxx.

Thank you for your time with our work. I/we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your affiliation(s)]

[Postal address]

[Email address]

<<Page break here>>

<<SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO REVIEW COMMENTS>>

**Author**

Insert title here.

**Author**

Delete if this is not a resubmission.

**Author**

Add manuscript title and number (if known) here.

**Author**

Add first submission date here. It helps to remind the editor how long the process has taken ☺

**Author**

Insert number of reviewers here. Usually two, sometimes three.

**Author**

Select and delete as appropriate.

**Author**

Please delete here as appropriate.

**Author**

Could be 'I', as appropriate.

**Author**

Could be 'my', as appropriate.

**Author**

Please choose one and delete the other.

**Author**

Select and delete as appropriate.

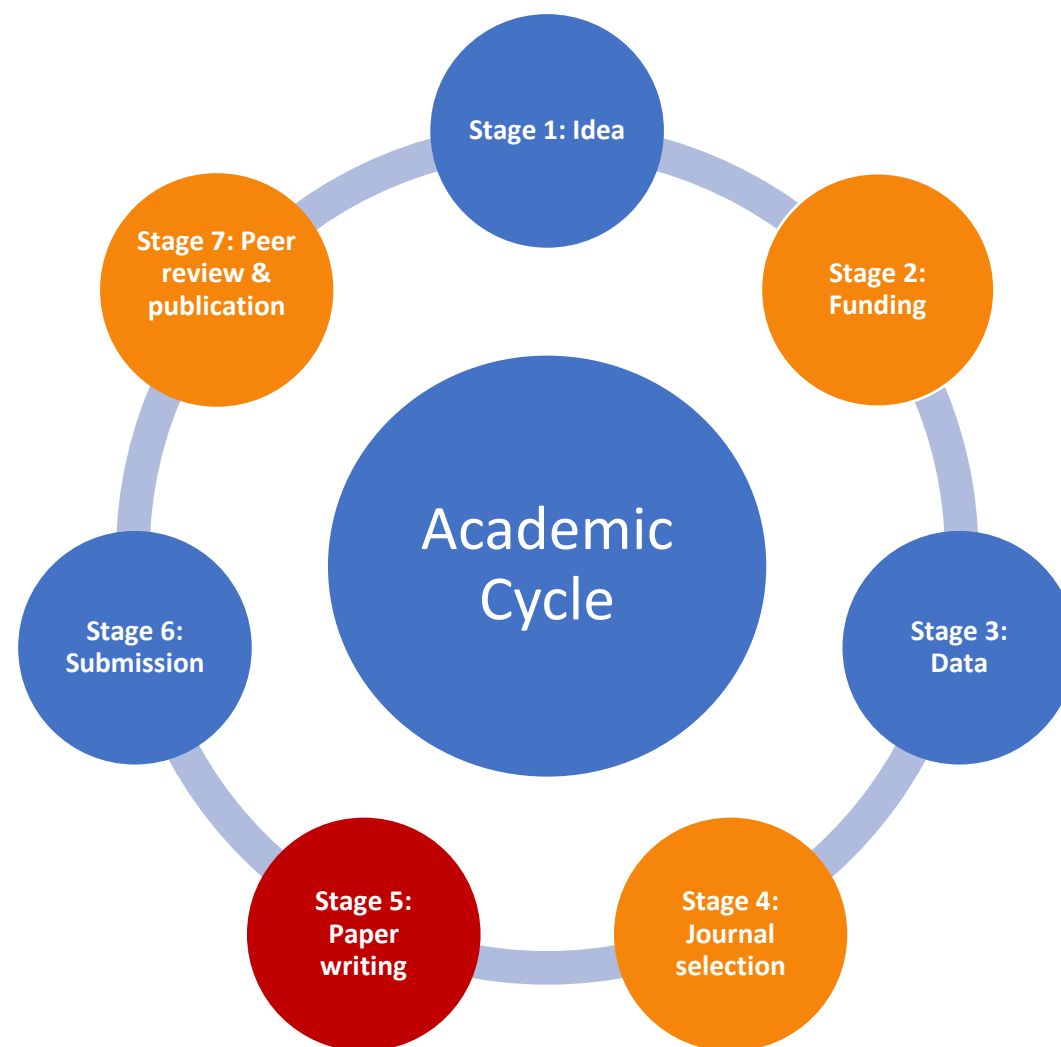
**Author**

Insert name of journal here.

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# Paper taking too much time?

[Date of letter]

[Add the name of your journal editor here]

[Add the address here]

[*Journal name*]

RE: Manuscript xxxx (insert current manuscript number if this is a re-submission)

Dear Editor:

I am sorry to bother you. I'm writing in regard to my article, xxx. This paper has been reviewed twice now and we have received minor revisions. Indeed, in the last cycle, three out of our four reviewers recommended acceptance and one asked again for some small changes. Our concern now is the time that this process is taking. Is there anything we can do to expedite this process?

Thank you so much for your time with this enquiry.  
I/we will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your affiliation(s)]

[Postal address]

[Email address]

**Author**

Insert title here.

**Author**

Delete if this is not a resubmission.

**Author**

Please insert title and number here.

We will provide you with an email template after the webinar

# Paper rejected!

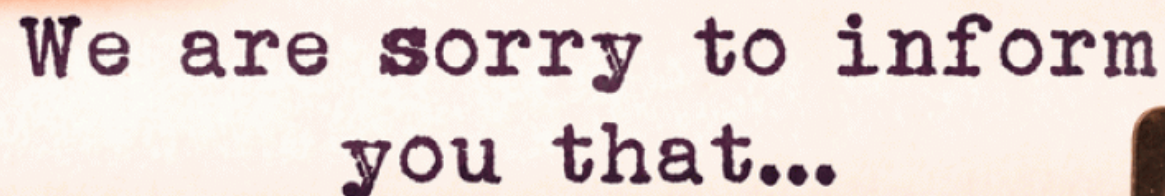


This happens more often than not

If you genuinely think that your research was important, well done, well-written and deserves to reach the journal's audience, you can write an appeal letter to the editor.

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A close-up photograph of a typewriter's carriage and paper. The paper has the text "We are sorry to inform you that..." typed in a dark purple or blue ink. The typewriter keys are visible at the bottom.

We are sorry to inform  
you that...

# Be *confident* and *believe* in your work



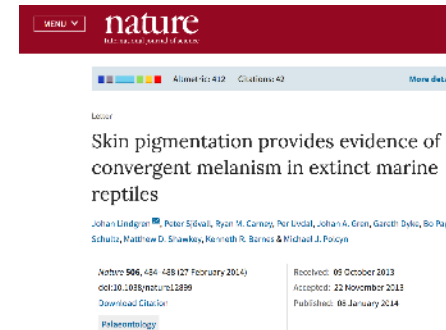
## ARTICLE

Received 10 Jun 2013 | Accepted 22 Aug 2013 | Published 18 Sep 2013

DOI: 10.1038/ncomms3489

### Aerodynamic performance of the feathered dinosaur *Microraptor* and the evolution of feathered flight

Gareth Dyke<sup>1,2</sup>, Roeland de Kat<sup>3</sup>, Colin Palmer<sup>1,4</sup>, Jacques van der Kindere<sup>3</sup>, Darren Naish<sup>1</sup> & Bharathram Ganapathisubramani<sup>2,3</sup>



**This is the one of the keys to success as an international researcher**

We will provide you with an email template after the webinar



# Things to avoid

## Trying to add authors to a paper once it's accepted

- ✓ Sending a paper to a journal requires all authors to know about and support submission
- ✓ Trying to add authors after acceptance immediately causes alarm at the editorial office: **WHY?**



- ✓ Any changes/additions to authorship after journal submission will require explanation/the approval of all currently listed authors
- ✓ Journals **hate** having to deal with these situations

### Example: A real email:

'Dear editor,

hello, thank you for reviewing my manuscript during your busy schedule. I have some minor modifications and added 2 authors. They have also contributed to my manuscript. In addition, the introduction of the corresponding author is added to facilitate communication with peers. The revised title page is in the attachment.'



# Submission: You need an ORCiD



## Imaging techniques for observing laminar geometry in the feather shaft cortex

CHRISTIAN LAURENT<sup>\*, †, ‡</sup> , SHARIF AHMED<sup>§</sup>, RICHARD BOARDMAN<sup>§</sup>, RICHARD COOK<sup>||</sup>, GARETH DYKE<sup>‡, #</sup>, COLIN PALMER<sup>\*\*</sup>, PHILIPP SCHNEIDER<sup>§, ††</sup> & ROELAND DE KAT<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup>Aerodynamics and Flight Mechanics Group, University of Southampton, Southampton, U.K.

<sup>†</sup>School of Ocean and Earth Science, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, U.K.

<sup>‡</sup>Department of Biology and Geology, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

<sup>§</sup> $\mu$ -Vis Centre for X-Ray Tomography, University of Southampton, Southampton, U.K.

<sup>||</sup>nCATS National Centre for Advanced Tribology Southampton, University of Southampton, Southampton, U.K.

<sup>#</sup>Department of Evolutionary Zoology, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary

<sup>\*\*</sup>Department of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol, U.K.

<sup>††</sup>Bioengineering Research Group, University of Southampton, Southampton, U.K.

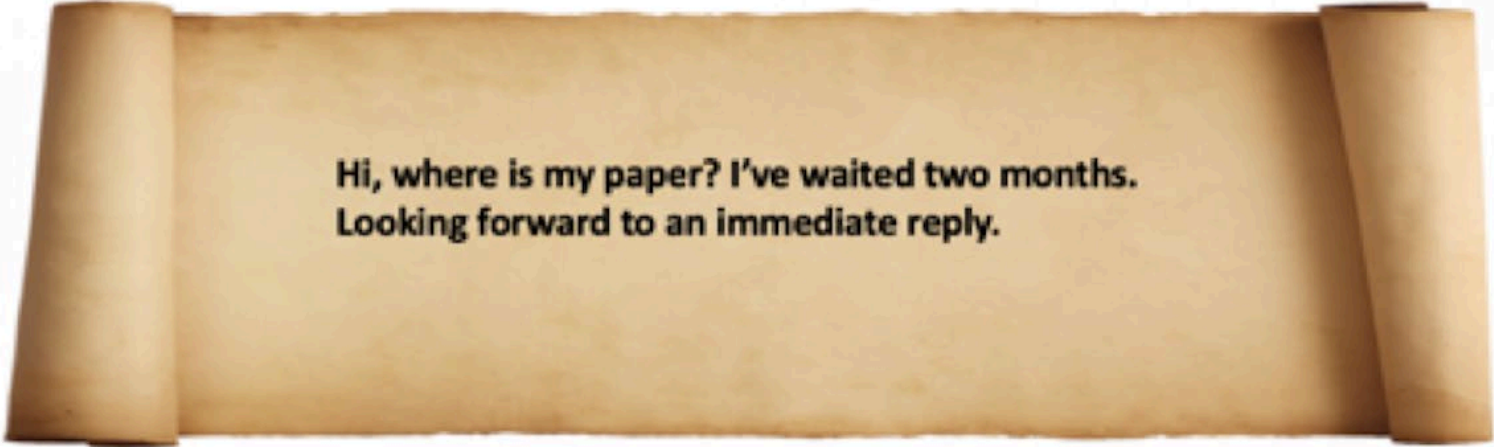
## DISTINGUISH YOURSELF IN THREE EASY STEPS

ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities ensuring that your work is recognized.

Confused? Our training and content  
can help! Get in touch!

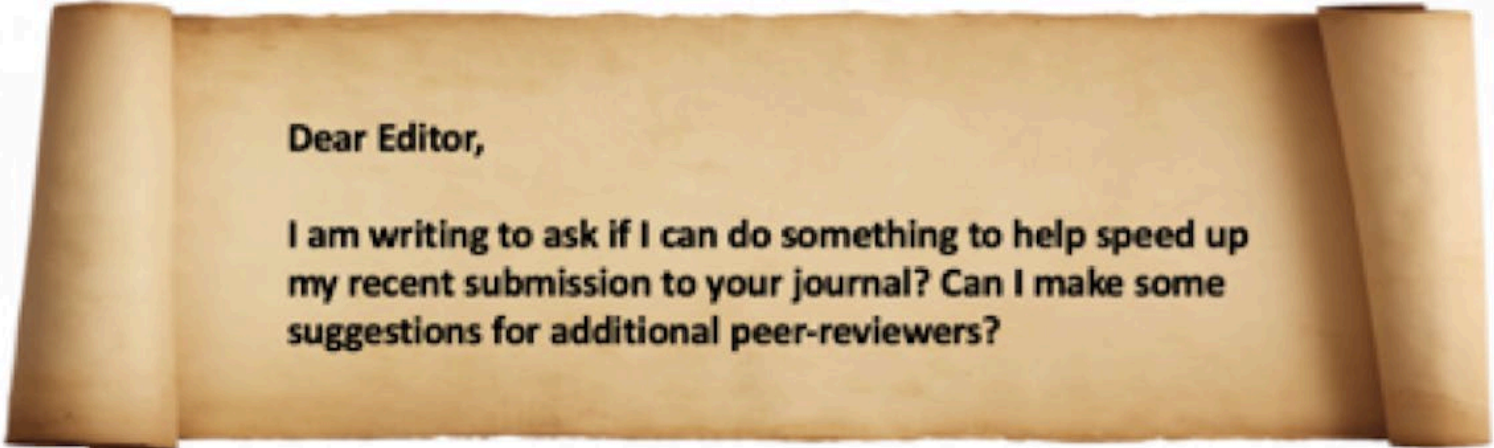
# Most important point:

## Writing to editors: *Communication* is key



Hi, where is my paper? I've waited two months.  
Looking forward to an immediate reply.

Real example of a *bad* email



Dear Editor,

I am writing to ask if I can do something to help speed up my recent submission to your journal? Can I make some suggestions for additional peer-reviewers?

Real example of a *good* email

# Communication is key: Maximise your success



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Any questions? Any issues? Just ask





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## What we have discussed?:

- (i) Our framework: The stages of the publishing cycle
- (ii) Good and bad communication: Tips

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# Contact

**Dr Frans Lettenstrom**  
Bentham Science Publishers  
[frans@benthamscience.net](mailto:frans@benthamscience.net)

*Thank you*

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