



Ten key steps: How to successfully publish?

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Often, we get approached by colleagues and students asking us how to successfully plan, write, and publish a paper. To share our experience and instruct you on how to write a great publication, we have collected these ten issues to guide you through the process.

The first step for writing a great paper is a meticulous literature review. Make sure that you have an overview of the current state of research and that you are familiar with the latest findings and advances in your field by reading your selected literature carefully. Umberto Eco^[1,2] summarized the problem that many authors face in “How to Write a thesis” very well: “*There are many things that I do not know because I photocopied a text and then relaxed as if I had read it.*”

In addition, make sure to use current and established works, and do not neglect to organize your notes and citations. There is nothing more frustrating than finding a great paper once but

then never again. Before you publish, make sure to critically evaluate your sources to be certain that they are reliable and relevant.

One of the most important pieces of advice we can give is to avoid procrastinating by scheduling your workload. The major enemy of motivation is endless postponing and rescheduling. To work around delays, we suggest creating a well-defined timeframe for every necessary step to publish your paper. Once realistic goals are set, it is important to create regular time slots without any unnecessary distractions and designate them only to work on your current project. It is mind-blowing how much work can be done by sitting down for just half an hour every day and actively working on your publication.

On the other hand, as someone directing research, it is of utmost importance to keep track of the progress and development of the planned publication by your colleagues. Careful coordination is the key to formulate an idea and publish a well-written paper. Advisors do not often follow the work of their team closely enough and let projects lose their dynamic. Sometimes, a nearly finished paper lies around, as no one reminded the author to continue working on it. It often takes just a simple question on the current state of the publication for the author to be re-motivated.

Furthermore, we strongly suggest scheduling research meetings and journal clubs at least once a month to keep up to date with the state of current research, develop ideas, and build a team. It allows everyone on your team to help others and be helped when needed, but most importantly, to come up with new ideas for future research. In our research meetings, we conceptualized many ideas that turned into great publications.

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Another notable approach to developing new ideas and following international trends in our field is to welcome fellows from all over the world to our clinic and make them part of our team. Every fellow who comes to learn from us also teaches us just as much. Apart from mutual learning, it is important to mention the positive impact of diverse perspectives on innovative projects. Many of our published papers are written with the contributions of our current and previous fellows who became great friends along the way.

Since our field is full of amazing people with great contributions in many distinct areas, it is most important to be open to collaboration and to keep ongoing collaborations active. Keep in mind that every great multicenter study started with people from different hospitals, countries, or even continents developing an idea together. By combining our expertise, we are creating projects that are greater than just the sum of the parts.

Being great collaborators also helps in collecting sufficient data. Many papers struggle with poor databases even when the idea may be great. Make sure that your data are collected carefully and fits the aim of your research. Furthermore, keep in mind the importance of good control group matching. Poor data collection or control group matching may corrupt your research and, thus, the credibility of your paper.

Good papers are written by those who have excellent knowledge in their respective fields. Clearly defining your niche and working within it help you acquire the concrete knowledge to conduct your research. Make sure that your scope of research is also something that truly captivates you. When we realized that certain femur types start to loosen more commonly than others, we investigated not to publish, as we were constantly thinking about it. This led to a novel radiological classification system of the distal femur: the Citak Classification.^[3-6]

Actively ask for feedback and let your colleagues read your work to ensure that what you are publishing meets standards and gain another perspective on your publications. Sometimes it is easy not to see the forest for the trees, and having friends and colleagues helping you deliver your thoughts clearly and precisely can be a great help. Accepting feedback also means that you may need

to revise. Plan sufficient time for the revision of your work. Thoroughly check formulations, style, and spelling. Always strive for clear and precise expression. Always make sure that your citations are complete and in order.

Finally, we should remind you to choose an adequate journal. Many authors select journals that are not too ambitious or journals that address the wrong field. It is advisable to choose journals that specifically cover your research area. Also, listening to the reviewers and their critique is crucial and more helpful than you might initially think. Many journals have excellent reviewers who are also specialists in the field that you investigate.

In conclusion, to write a great paper, you need to make sure to do a deep and thorough literature review, plan your time carefully and keep track of the progress, discuss project ideas in research meetings and listen to your friends and colleagues, collaborate with other clinics, work with good data, and write about something that you have a deep interest in.

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