

The journals you are examining might come directly from a search on Scopus or Web of Science, or from other sources in TSU's electronic library, reference lists in articles, professional organizations, colleagues, and elsewhere.

When you examine the website of a journal, here are things to ask yourself:

CHOOSING A TARGET JOURNAL(S)

1. **Is this is a predatory site?** – see ‘Spotting predatory (fake) “journals”’.

2. **What about money—is the journal subscription-only, open access option, or ‘pure’ open access? Does it have membership requirements?**

Subscription journals are the traditional kind that are supported by individuals and libraries who pay to receive every issue. Many are now published online, in addition to print, and some of them are now only online, but the model is the same, and nonsubscribers must buy an article. The rights to most uses of the article belong to the journal, not the author, because the author has signed over the copyright.

Open access option journals are subscription journals that are published online or have an online version and offer authors the choice of paying a fee to have their article accessible to everyone, not only subscribers. For the author, this means not signing a copyright agreement, instead it is usually a form of Creative Commons agreement that leaves most of the rights to the use of the article with the author as long as it is properly cited. Legitimate open access option journals (sometimes called hybrid journals) send authors a letter *after their article has been accepted, after peer review* asking whether the author wants to have it open access, and enclosing the payment instructions if they do. (So the journal does not know while reviewing an article what the author wants, so there is not even theoretical influence of money on acceptance.) Journals have various terms and emblems for this choice.

‘Pure’ open access journals (‘OA journals’) publish only online and only open access. (PLoS ONE is a well-known example that was one of the first.) OA developed because some researchers in the United States and elsewhere were required to publish their results in a way that was open to anyone to read, because their grant funding had come from public, taxpayer money; it was expected that there would be a few thousand dollars in the grant that would pay the fee. Since then, OA publishing has taken on a life of its own, and both it and the subscription model are controversial and will evolve further. Some OA journals are published by universities, academies of science, professional organizations, and other nonprofit entities. All legitimate OA journals do careful peer review, so the number of articles they can publish is still limited even though the journals are online.

Bottom line: Publishing OA does create an opportunity for the article to reach more people sooner, and for authors to retain most of the rights to its use. The author is responsible for the fee if no one else pays it. All OA journals should very clearly

display the amounts of their APCs (author page charges, article processing charges), as they are often called.

Finally, another way that money can be involved is that for some journals, the author must be a member of the organization to submit an article.

Tip: The majority of the people we know who have published in English have done so without any payment of money (because the majority of journals are still subscription journals, and some OA journals do not have author fees).

3. What about metrics?

Scopus (owned by Elsevier) revamped its database and uses individual positions to describe the ranking of a journal in its category, rather than quartiles (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4) (which lump together the top 25%, the next 25%, and so on). This move is realistic, because in most categories, there are a relatively few journals at the top that have higher SJRs (their term for impact factor); after those first 5 or 10, the numbers for the rest of them are remarkably close. So, for example, the journal you are looking at might be #2 of 107 in its category, or #45 of 250. The data can never be completely up to date. So the numbers and rankings can easily shift around by the time the article is published (just a few citations can make the difference in positions). Scimago shows the journal's ranking over the years, which can be helpful.

Those journals at the top are the elite ones that reject almost all articles and can take many months to decide whether to even review a submission. Those at the bottom may have an unstable history on Scopus that makes it harder to predict whether they will even be there for the time period that your article would be published. Because of self-citation, even a journal in what would be Q2 can be predatory, so it's still important to check.

Web of Science (formerly owned by Thomson Reuters, now owned by an independent company, Clarivate) uses the term impact factor. It is currently not available in the country (but its list of journals is, see the attachment Using the TSU Library).

In general, it seems that most journals that appear on one of these citation databases also appears on the other—but if you don't find a journal on Scopus, it's worthwhile to check Web of Science, and vice versa, in case it is covered.

4. What types of contributions does it accept? What is the required or maximum length of each type of contribution?

Most journals will list the types of contributions they accept—in addition to full-length research articles, there may be shorter research reports, commentaries, and other types of communications accepted. Publishing in one of those formats can be an excellent way to 'get your foot in the door' in your field. In any case, you need to be able to produce an article of about the number of words that is stipulated. (Since English-language journals usually expect experimental research to be described in complete detail, having enough words in the limit to do that can actually be an

issue.) Be sure to note the differences between English words and Russian characters and spaces as the unit of measurement. (For the same content, there tend to be more words in English but the length of the English text is less, all because of the long words in Russian.)

5. Does the journal accept any articles that are not based on original research? What are the requirements about research?

Would you definitely need to do original research to create an article, possibly experimental research (depending on your field)? If so, can it be presented qualitatively or descriptively, or would it need to be quantitative and would statistical analysis be required? (This is extremely important in social sciences and some types of humanities, as well as more obvious in the physical sciences.) And—if human or animal subjects are involved, what are the specific standards that you would need to meet when you do the research?

6. Who is the audience of the journal?

Some journal websites do talk about who reads the journal and why. In any case it's important to gather some idea of this by reviewing abstracts and reading some of the articles, because your article would be aimed at that audience and needs to be relevant and useful to *them* and on the right level of specialization. The audience of OA journals can be broader because anyone can actually read the articles.

7. What are the current articles about?

It's not just the overall topic or area the journal is about that is important. Journals cannot publish everything, and it's important to notice what types of topics are actually being published, what is of interest now, and whether yours is relevant. Also important is the orientation of the journal—is it social work or the training of social workers, is it language but from the perspective of anthropology or teaching or something else, is it philosophy but analytic philosophy, and so on. Multidisciplinary topics are especially difficult to find the right fit for, and reading some abstracts and articles, as well as what a journal says about itself and its audience, is even more important.

Just as crucial is looking at the narrowness of the article topics, and the depth with which a topic is analyzed—in general, English-language articles tend to have relatively narrow, focused topics and analyze the topic in great depth, while still showing the significance to the big picture. Can you produce something that is equally focused and describes the research in the appropriate amount of detail?

Tips:

1. Read all the abstracts for the most recent two years of the journal—if it is on Scopus or Web of Science, they will be there. (Most journals also have them available on their websites, but not always.)

2. Choose and review carefully several full articles for topics, level, methods, references, structure, and language. Try to find one or two that can later be used as a model, especially of language.

A target journal should never be chosen without this review of abstracts and some articles.

3. See if there are any special issues of the journal planned that may especially suit your topic. If an international journal of social work plans a special issue on social work in Russia, or a journal of ecology is planning a special issue on Western Siberia, then your article about children's services in Tomsk or the types of trees in the Tomsk Region automatically becomes relevant! Otherwise, they may not be, unless you can show the usefulness to people who are not here.

4. It's possible to send a preliminary abstract or summary of the article you plan to do to a journal and inquire whether something like this is potentially of interest to them. They are not required to reply, but many will—and in some cases they may suggest a journal that they know of that may be the most suited, as well as letting you know about theirs.

What would I need to do to actually produce the article?

Every journal has a section of instructions for authors reviewing all the requirements and instructions for authors (in some cases there are two, one general one for the publisher and one specific to that journal). It has all sorts of things that you must do and take into consideration to be able to produce an article that can be submitted to them. (And it is usually much more than only how to list the references.) These instructions should be found and reviewed before choosing the journal as a target and any questions about them cleared up in advance.

Does it offer copyright or Creative Commons, and does it matter to you?

Copyright agreements (as noted, the norm for subscription journals) restrict how anyone else, including the author, can use the article (even in many cases on their own website, for example, or in updating it later or sharing the content of it with other scholars—these may not be allowed). If this is of concern, it's wise to check the details, because the big publishers do seem to enforce these agreements. Creative Commons agreements are more flexible, and can sometimes be made based on individual requirements, but it also is wise to read and consider the details, even though you will be glad that your article is accepted.

Is there any indication of how long it is taking articles to get published? or what percentage are accepted? or when you might receive a decision on whether it will go to peer review?

BOTTOM LINE: Do you have something to say and is this the place where you can, realistically, say it?

Authors may submit their article to only one journal at a time, so it's helpful to choose first one, and then have another one or two in mind to act quickly if it's rejected by the first. Sometimes it is possible to query a journal with a summary or abstract of your proposed article to see if it might possibly fit or not.

And one more thing...What about conference journals?

Conference journals have become useful and popular in some scientific and technical fields where rapid communication of research is crucial. In general, though, conference articles, which were once considered reports on developing research that was being presented at the conference to get input from others, have seemed to become a form of publishing because they are placed in conference journals that are sometimes included in Scopus or Web of Science. However, they are not peer-reviewed by the publisher and they do not contain full accounts of research, which is why in many fields they should not be used as sources in research. (However, at some conferences some participants are invited to develop a full-length article that is later published, possibly together with others, and that's different—the key is to know whether an article has been peer-reviewed by other scientists, or just read by an editor/conference organizer as part of a group). As noted in the material on spotting predatory journals, there are many fake and low-quality conference journals, some of them in Scopus. Since about 2016, it seems that there are no legitimate conference journals in Scopus in the social sciences and humanities (and conference journals in other fields should be checked carefully).