



How to choose the right journal

What do you look for when choosing which journal to approach? Impact factors may be important but they're not the whole story.

1

Check the turnaround times

Find out what the turnaround times are for your chosen journal. It can sometimes be many months from submission to publishing. Will your research still be current? Be cautious when a journal cites only the 'date accepted/date published' period...acceptance could have happened months after submission.

2

Think beyond the impact factor

A high impact factor may be attractive, but the higher the impact factor, the tougher the peer review process. Are you and your research ready for this? It's far better to choose a journal because it is read by your target audience and has influence among the decision-makers you want to reach.

3

Invest in open access

Avoid dismissing open access journals as too costly an option. You have invested a lot of time and resources in developing your research, so why not invest in convincing donors that your results are worth sharing? If you are aiming for open access journals, budget at the start for any open access costs and remember you can negotiate fees with journals.

4

Stick to the journal's guidelines

Print off the journal's guidelines and read them very carefully. They will tell you about word counts and the amount of tables and figures you can include. Be sure you can stick to the journal's rules or you risk rejection or a lengthy review and revision process.

5

Write a covering letter

ALWAYS write a covering letter to the editor setting out what's new about your research and what your findings say. Never send your paper without this initial enquiry. The covering letter is your first entry point to the journal and will often be read by non-specialist staff. Keep your letter brief and clear.

Summarised from a presentation by Dr Rony Zachariah as part of The Union and MSF SORT-IT course 