

UNDERSTANDING THE PUBLISHING PROCESS

# How to publish in scholarly journals



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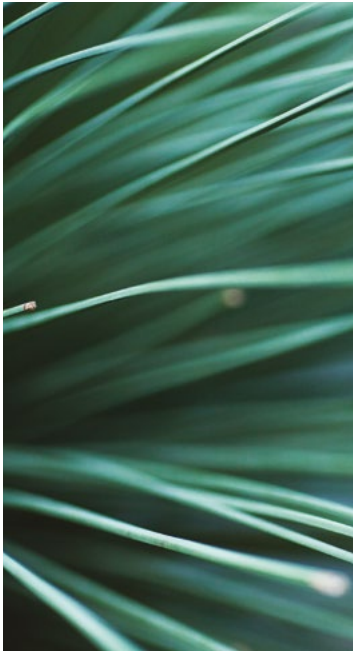
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# How to publish in scholarly journals

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## UNDERSTANDING THE PUBLISHING PROCESS

# How to publish in scholarly journals

## Introduction

| 1

As researchers, you make huge strides in advancing essential knowledge. Your achievements can save lives and improve the way we live. If you're ready to share your knowledge with the world, this booklet outlines the best opportunities for publishing your research – and for seeing it shared globally.

The first question to ask yourself is, 'Do I have a story to tell?' Editors and reviewers look for original and innovative research that adds to their field of study, or immediately impacts patient care. This means that your conclusions must be sound and based on sufficiently robust data.

Secondly, ask yourself, 'Is there an audience for my research findings?' The more original and innovative your research, the more people will be interested. Consider whether your research is of interest to a local, regional or international audience. Identifying your audience is a major factor in selecting the right journal to submit your manuscript to. You can read more about selecting a journal in *section 2.2*.

### There are several types of research articles:

1. **Letters** and **rapid or short communications** are intended for the quick and early communication of significant or original advances, without including too much data or detail.
2. **Review papers** summarize recent developments on a specific topic, without introducing new data.
3. **Full articles** contain significant data, detail, developments and outcomes.
4. The new **microarticle** format enables you to publish research output, such as data, software, methods, videos and much more.

If you're unsure which type of article to write, discuss your options with your supervisor or colleagues. For the purposes of this booklet, we offer guidance for writing and publishing a full article. Once you've decided to write a full article, follow the guidelines of your chosen journal, and the general guidelines for scientific writing outlined in the following sections.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Finding the right journal for your article can be key to reaching your target audience.

- Take into consideration the type of article you'd like to publish (full length, letter, review, microarticle)
- Check the references in your article, to give an indication of possible journals of interest
- Read the journal's aims and scope on the journal homepage on [elsevier.com](https://www.elsevier.com)
- Read or download the journal's Guide for Authors
- Check if the journal is invitation-only; some journals only accept articles after inviting the author to submit
- Check the journal's performance for review and publication timelines (*see 2.3*)
- If you need to publish open access, remember that most Elsevier journals explain their open access options on the journal homepage (*see 2.4*)
- Submit your paper to only one journal at a time (*see 3.6, on ethics*)

## 2.2 JOURNAL FINDER

The Journal Finder tool locates Elsevier journals that most closely match your abstracts. An Elsevier journal will be recommended if it has published articles that are highly similar to your article. A list of relevant articles is generated, and the tool can filter on your preferred criteria, such as open access options, impact factor, review time, acceptance rate and production time. See [journalfinder.elsevier.com](https://journalfinder.elsevier.com).

## 2.3 JOURNAL METRICS

Journal metrics are at your disposal to help you select the most appropriate journal for your article. When used alongside information about the journal's scope, editorial board, international outlook and audience, they can help you to find the best destination for your research.

### Different types of journal metrics

It's good practice to look at more than one metric to help you make your decision. You'll find a dedicated Journal Insights section on many of the journal home pages on [elsevier.com](https://www.elsevier.com), giving information about the journal's:

- **Speed** – review speed and online publication time
- **Reach** – geographic location of corresponding authors and journal usage
- **Impact** – impact metrics based on citations received by articles

### Impact metrics

The average impact of all the articles in a journal is often used as a proxy for the impact of a specific article – especially when the article hasn't yet had time to accumulate its own citations. It's important to take this kind of proxy metric into consideration.

The Journal Insights section on the Elsevier.com journal homepage has several impact metrics to be aware of. They all consider citations received per article, accounting for the size of each journal:

	SNIP	IPP	SJR	Impact Factor	Eigenfactor
Full name	Source-Normalized Impact per Paper	Impact per Publication	SCImago Journal Rank	–	–
Measures	Citations relative to average for discipline; SNIP > 1 means journal is cited more than average for field	Average citations per article, review and conference paper. This is the numerator of SNIP	Average prestige per publication, depending on the SJR of the citing journal	Average citations per publication	Importance of a journal within its network
Accounts for varying journal size?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Accounts for varying behaviour between disciplines?	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Availability	Free of charge from Elsevier at <a href="http://journalmetrics.com">journalmetrics.com</a> Free of charge via individual journal homepages: Journal Insights			Thomson Reuters Free of charge via individual journal homepages: Journal Insights.	Free of charge at <a href="http://eigenfactor.org">eigenfactor.org</a> Free of charge via individual journal homepages: Journal Insights

## 2.4 OPEN ACCESS OPTIONS

In general, open access stands for the free and permanent access to published research, combined with clear guidelines for readers to share and use the content. There are two main types of open access: gold and green.

### What is the difference between Gold and Green?

	GOLD OPEN ACCESS	GREEN OPEN ACCESS
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free public access to the final published article</li> <li>Access is immediate and permanent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free public access to a version of your article</li> <li>Time delay may apply (embargo period)</li> </ul>
Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open access fee is paid by the author, or on their behalf (for example by a funding body)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fee is payable by the author, as costs are covered by library subscriptions</li> </ul>
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determined by your user license</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authors retain the right to use their articles for a wide range of purposes. All open versions of your article should have a user license attached</li> </ul>
Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish in an open access journal</li> <li>Publish in a journal that supports open access (also known as a hybrid journal)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link to your article</li> <li>For selected journals Elsevier makes the articles freely available after an embargo period in the open archives</li> <li>Self-archive your manuscript</li> </ol>



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Some funding bodies or institutions have a policy on public access to research. It's important to know the open access policy of your institution or funding body before you decide whether or not to publish open access. Elsevier offers a wide range of publication options for your research to comply with funding policy or institutional mandates. Elsevier publishes more than 220 gold open access journals and offers more than 1600 options to publish open access in subscription journals. For more information on your open access options, see [elsevier.com/openaccessoptions](http://elsevier.com/openaccessoptions).

## 3.1 YOUR MANUSCRIPT

### Title

The title is the main advertisement for your article. A great title entices the audience to read on; a poorly-titled article may never reach its target readers.

Your article's title should reflect its content clearly, enabling readers to decide whether it's relevant for them. Make the title catchy and keep it specific. Leave out phrases such as 'a study of', 'investigations into', 'observations on'; and avoid using abbreviations and jargon.

Remember, too, that abstracting and indexing services depend on accurate titles; they extract keywords from them for cross-referencing.

Why '*The effect of heating the albumen and vitellus of the Gallus gallus domesticus contained in calcium carbonate in H<sub>2</sub>O to 373.15 K*' when '*Boiling a chicken egg in water*' says it?

Essentially, effective titles:

- identify the article's main issue
- begin with the article's subject matter
- are accurate, unambiguous, specific and (when possible) complete
- are as short as possible
- are enticing and interesting; they make people want to read further

### Authors

Only authors who've made an intellectual contribution to the research should be credited; those who'll take responsibility for the data and conclusions, and who've approved the final manuscript. The order of credited names can vary between disciplines; the corresponding author may not always be the first author.

### Keyword list

Most journals request a list of keywords; important words that, along with those in the title, capture the research effectively. Keywords are used by abstracting and indexing services; choosing the right ones can increase the chances of your article being found by other researchers. Many Elsevier journals also ask for a subject classification during the online submission process; this helps editors to select reviewers.

### Abstract

The abstract is your chance to describe your research in 200 words – so use it wisely. Together, the title and abstract should be able to fully represent your article, including for use by indexing services. Many authors write the abstract last, so it reflects the content accurately.

The abstract should summarize the problem or objective of your research, and its method, results, and conclusions. Usually an abstract doesn't include references, figures or tables. It should mention each significant

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section of the article, with enough detail for readers to decide whether or not to read the whole paper. While it's great to make the abstract interesting, above all it should be accurate. Don't promise more than your article delivers.

### **The body of the text**

Make the introduction brief. It should provide context and background, but not be a history lesson. It should state the problem being investigated, its contextual background, and the reasons for conducting the research. State the questions you're answering and explain any findings of others that you're challenging or furthering. Briefly and logically lead the reader to your hypotheses, research questions, and experimental design or method.

### **Method**

*(also called Materials and Methods or Experimental Methods)*

This section should be detailed enough that readers can replicate your research, and assess whether the methods justify the conclusions. It's advisable to use the past tense – it's about what you *did* – and avoid using the first person, although this will vary from journal to journal. Ultimately, you should explain how you studied the problem, identify the procedures you followed, and structure this information as logically as possible.

If your methods are new, you'll need to explain them in detail. If they've been published before, cite the original work, including your amendments if you've made modifications. Identify the equipment and the materials you used, specifying their source. State the frequency of observations and what types of data were recorded. Give precise measurements, stating their strengths and weaknesses when necessary. Name any statistical tests, so your quantitative results can be judged.

If your research involved human participants, animals, stem cells or other biohazard materials, you'll need to include certain information in the ethics statement, such as committee approvals and permission to publish. You should also explain your criteria for selecting participants.

### **Results**

This section should present your findings objectively, explaining them largely in text. It's where you show how your results contribute to the body of scientific knowledge, so be clear and logical. And it's important not to interpret your results – that comes in the Discussion & Conclusions section.

You can base the sequence of this text on the tables, figures and graphs that best present your findings. Emphasize any significant findings clearly. Tables and figures must be numbered separately; figures should have a brief but complete description – a legend – that reveals how the data was produced.

### **Discussion & Conclusions**

This is where you describe the meaning of your results, especially in the context of what was already known about the subject. You can present



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general and specific conclusions, but take care not to summarize your article – that’s what the abstract is for.

You should link this section back to the introduction, referring to your questions or hypotheses, and cover how the results relate to your expectations and cited sources. Do the results support or contradict existing theories? Are there any limitations? You can also suggest further experiments, uses and extensions.

Above all, the discussion should explain how your research has moved the body of scientific knowledge forward. Your conclusions must be supportable and not extend beyond your results, so avoid undue speculation and bold judgments about impact. This is also a good place to suggest practical applications for your results, and to outline what the next steps in your research will be.

To summarize, make sure that:

- your results directly support your conclusions
- you use specific expressions and quantitative descriptions – ‘12 degrees higher’ instead of ‘a higher temperature’
- you only discuss what you defined early in the paper – don’t introduce the reader to a whole new vocabulary. If you missed an important term, go back to the introduction and insert it
- all interpretations and speculations are based on fact, not imagination

### **Acknowledgments**

Keep acknowledgements brief, naming those who helped with your research; contributors, or suppliers who provided free materials. You should also disclose any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that could be seen to influence your results or interpretations.

### **References**

New research builds on previously published work, which should always be acknowledged. Any information that isn’t ‘common knowledge’, or generated by your experiments, must be recognized with a citation; and quoted text should be within quotation marks, and include a reference. The format of citations and references varies, so you should refer to the Guide for Authors for the journal you’re submitting to.

## **3.2 LANGUAGE QUALITY**

A scientific article should report your findings and conclusions as clearly and concisely as possible. To achieve this:

- Try to avoid unnecessary words or phrases – keep it simple
- Use active writing when possible. For example, ‘Carbon dioxide was consumed by the plant’ is passive. Active writing shortens this phrase to, ‘The plant consumed carbon dioxide’ – which is much snappier
- Tense is important. For known facts and hypotheses, use the present tense: ‘The average life expectancy of a honey bee is six weeks.’ But use the past tense when referring to experiments you’ve conducted: ‘All the honey bees were maintained in an environment with a consistent temperature of 23°C.’ And also use the past tense to describe results: ‘The average life span of bees in our contained environment was eight weeks.’

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**PROF. CHEN JING,**  
Beijing Normal University, China

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### 3.4 CONTENT INNOVATION

Content innovations present your work in a more powerful form, making your article stand out from the crowd. Features such as the Virtual Microscope, Interactive Map Viewer and 3D Molecular Models on ScienceDirect can increase your article’s value. To find out which content innovations are available for journals in your research field, visit [elsevier.com/about/content-innovation](http://elsevier.com/about/content-innovation).

#### 3.4.1 AUDIOSLIDES

AudioSlides are short, webcast-style presentations that let you present your research in your own words. Elsevier offers you the option of creating your own unique AudioSlides presentation; appearing alongside your published article on ScienceDirect, it complements your research and gives readers a succinct overview of your article’s content. AudioSlides are free to access and can be shared – independently of the article – with colleagues, influential bloggers and on social media, including YouTube. You can make the most of your AudioSlides with our useful Tips and Tricks: [elsevier.com/audioslides](http://elsevier.com/audioslides).

#### 3.4.2 GRAPHICAL ABSTRACTS

A graphical abstract is a visual summary of your article’s main findings. Placed along with your article on ScienceDirect, graphical abstracts also turn up in online search results and help people to see your article’s key points at a glance.

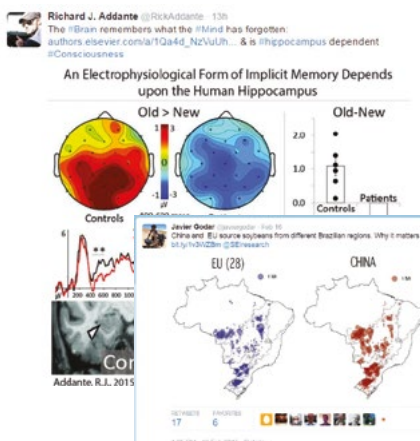
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“The reader also gets a quick grasp about the paper that cannot be explained in a short written abstract”

**TILBE GÖKSUN,**  
Assistant Professor of Psychology at Koç University, Istanbul on creating her AudioSlides



Tweeted graphical abstracts



“With *Data in Brief*, many developments in research can become more useful when data sources are shared.

We are excited and grateful for the opportunity to have our data accessible at no cost to the community.”

PROF. BARRAZA-LOPEZ,  
Department of Physics, University of Arkansas

### 3.5 ADDING DATA

Sharing research data is a good scientific practice; sharing makes your scientific findings reproducible and helps others to build upon them. Elsevier helps researchers to store, share, discover and use data – for example by creating bidirectional links between articles and data, and launching data journals. For more information, see [elsevier.com/about/research-data/open-data](https://elsevier.com/about/research-data/open-data).

### 3.6 ETHICS

Understanding the boundaries in scientific research and publishing is a key step in making sure your work gets off to the best start. Scientific misconduct and breach of publishing ethics can take different forms, and be committed knowingly or unknowingly. Examples of misconduct and breaches include:

- **Authorship disputes** – deliberately misrepresenting a scientist’s relationship with published work
- **Conflict of interest** – not disclosing to a journal that you have a direct or indirect conflict which prevents you from being unbiased
- **Plagiarism** – passing off another’s work or idea as your own
- **Simultaneous submission** – submitting a paper to more than one publication at the same time
- **Research fraud** – including fabrication (making up research data) and falsification (manipulating research data, tables or images)
- **Salami slicing** – the ‘slicing-up’ of research that would form one meaningful paper into several different papers

The Ethics in Research & Publication Program is a collaboration between Elsevier and an independent panel of experts in research and publishing ethics. The program’s online resources and tools have been developed to help you feel confident that you’re doing the right things. See [elsevier.com/ethics](https://elsevier.com/ethics).

### 3.7 SEO YOUR ARTICLE

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps to ensure that your article appears higher in the results returned by search engines such as Google. This can mean you attract more readers, gain higher visibility in the academic community, and potentially increase citations.

Tips for SEO include:

- Use keywords, especially in the title and abstract
- Add captions with keywords to all photographs, images, graphs and tables
- Add titles or subheadings (with keywords) to the different sections of your article
- Make sure there are as many links as possible to your article, e.g., from your institute’s website, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, blogs and social media

For more detailed information on how to use SEO, see our guidelines on the Publishing Campus, College of Skills Training: [publishingcampus.com](https://publishingcampus.com).

Once you've checked (and re-checked!) your manuscript, you're ready to submit it to the journal editor via the submission and peer review system.

## 4.1 HOW TO SUBMIT A PAPER?

Elsevier's Editorial System (EES) has transitioned to Evise®, a fully online workflow for article publication. Submission is simple: direct links for registration and log-in are provided from our journals' Guide for Authors.

## 4.2 PEER REVIEW

After submission, each manuscript is checked for plagiarism, and assessed carefully to determine if it fits the aims and scope of the journal. If journal representatives are enthusiastic about the work, the journal editor will appoint reviewers.

### What does the peer reviewer do?

Reviewers help determine the validity, significance and originality of the work, and can suggest improvements to the manuscript and the research. On their recommendation, editors will accept, accept with revisions, or reject a manuscript.

To make good judgments, peer reviewers use their own checklists to evaluate the content for scientific value and originality, to see that articles adhere to general scientific practice as well as the journal's specific guidelines, and to check that you've referenced correctly. The peer reviewer will look closely at your methodology and the validity of your data, and consider your ethical approach. They will then recommend changes before your manuscript is published. See [elsevier.com/reviewers/home](https://elsevier.com/reviewers/home) for more details.

### Different types of peer review

Type of review	Description
Single blind (most common)	Reviewer identity hidden from author; reviewer knows identity of authors
Double blind	Both reviewer and author remain anonymous to each other
Open	Reviewer and author are known to each other

## 4.3 ARTICLE TRANSFER SERVICE

Several Elsevier journals operate a complimentary Article Transfer Service. The editor will offer this service if they feel your article fits better with another Elsevier journal; with your approval, your submission will be transferred there.

## 4.4 CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR PAPER

After submission you can follow the status of your article in the Elsevier Editorial System (EES or Evise), using a reference number that you'll receive by email.

If your paper is accepted for publication, you can follow the publication status through to completion using the 'track your article' feature. You'll receive a reference number and link via email, after final decision.

# After acceptance: article in press, proofing, share link and offprints

## Congratulations! Your article has been accepted!

There are a few more things to consider that can optimise the publication of your work. Elsevier will do everything it can to have your article published as quickly and accurately as possible.

### 5.1 ARTICLES IN PRESS

Accepted articles are published online on ScienceDirect as an ‘article in press’, and assigned an issue at a later date. You can track your article and citations throughout this process.

### 5.2 PROOFING

Accurate proofreading and clear marking of corrections are essential for the production of a quality article. As soon as your article has been typeset, you’ll receive an email with either a PDF attachment of your article or a link to it on our online proofing system.

### 5.3 SHARE LINK AND OFFPRINTS

Most of our journals give authors a personalized link that provides 50 days free access to the final published version of their article on ScienceDirect. This link can also be used for sharing via email and social networks. For more information see [elsevier.com/author-share-link](https://elsevier.com/author-share-link).

Some journals provide offprints; an exact copy of the article published either on paper or as a PDF.

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**Anna Jacob Egalite** @annaegalite · Feb 27

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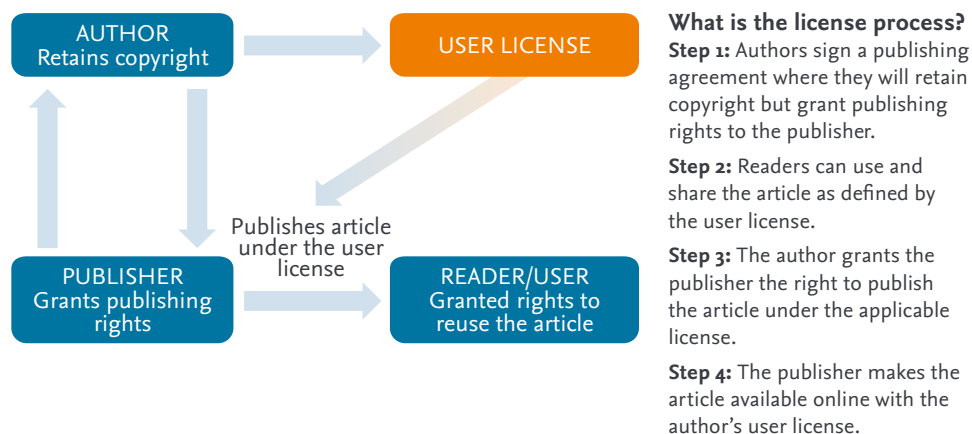
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Promoting your research does not begin after your manuscript is finished and has been published online. It should be on your mind even whilst you are doing it and writing up your paper. Promoting your research also continues some time after it has been published and the tracking the performance of your promotion activities will help drive improved results. For more detailed guidelines see [elsevier.com/promote-your-work](https://elsevier.com/promote-your-work).



“Once authors have published in an Elsevier journal, they come back because of the other things Elsevier does for them: the My Research

Dashboard, the support for how to get the word out, how do you deal with media, how do you look at the impact of what you've done.”

**DR. BARBARA YAWN,**  
*Director, Department of Research, Olmsted Medical Center; Adjunct Professor, University of Minnesota; Chief Editor, Respiratory Medicine Case Reports*

## 7.1 SHARE YOUR PAPER

Sharing your research and findings can help you make a greater impact in your community, leading to better collaboration, new ideas and potential innovations. Millions of researchers have access to your publication on ScienceDirect, helping them to find, access, and cite your research in its best available version.

Elsevier will send you a ‘Share Link’: a personal, customized short link that you’ll receive after the final publication of your article. We encourage you to share this link on social media; anyone clicking on it gets 50 days free access to your newly published article on ScienceDirect.

The more links there are to your article from a range of websites, the more readers you’ll attract and the higher it will appear on search engine results.

For more information on sharing your article see [elsevier.com/sharing-articles](https://elsevier.com/sharing-articles).

## 7.2 BE DISCOVERED ONLINE

It's important people can find you and links to your publications online. There are a few easy tools to help you increase your online visibility.

If you have a personal page at your institute, include links to the final versions of your articles on that page. You should also ensure that your CV is available online, with links to your publications. You can do this on the popular networking site LinkedIn, or on a personal website or blog.

Finally, keep your SCOPUS and ORCID author profiles up-to-date so others can find your journal. You can now update both at [orcid.org](https://orcid.org) and [scopusfeedback.com](https://scopusfeedback.com). Just follow the easy online steps.

## 7.3 CONFERENCES

Presenting and networking personalizes your work, giving it a face and voice, and can create new opportunities for collaboration. Make sure you connect with other delegates on Facebook and LinkedIn, and direct them to your website or blog. If you create a poster for a conference, post it on your website and provide links on your blog, social media profiles, online CV, or institutional page.

#### 7.4 SOCIAL MEDIA

Every day, scholarly articles receive 12,000 new mentions across social media, news and blogs: that's one mention every seven seconds! It's a powerful medium for reaching your potential readers. You don't have to be on all social media – it can be best to find one or two channels that suit you and your purposes. The most widely-used media are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Build up a group of followers and share links to your publications. You can enhance your posts with visuals and videos that attract more attention. And don't forget to share your AudioSlides and Graphical Abstracts.

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*Article by Vivian Kouri et al. published in open access journal EBiomedicine featured on CBS News*



## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

It's worth bearing in mind that your peers and tutors monitor your impact. Being aware of this helps you to submit your article to the most appropriate place (section 2.3), and also to position yourself by proactively supplying information about your own performance.

Just like when you're considering where to publish, the best approach to monitoring your impact is to have multiple ways of assessing your performance.

If you're at an early stage in your career, you can use metrics that don't require longer timeframes:

- **Collaboration** – how big is your network? What's the status of colleagues in your network? Where in the world are they located?
- **Scholarly output** – how productive are you?
- **Usage** – how often have your publications been viewed?
- **Altmetrics** – how many times is your output shared in collaboration networks like Mendeley or on social media?
- **Journal status** – what's the status of the journals that have published your work? The average citation impact of all the articles in a journal is a useful proxy for the impact your articles will achieve when they've had time to accumulate citations.

When you're at a later stage in your research career, with a sizeable output and an impressive number of citations, further metrics can then become useful:

- **Citation count** – how many citations has your articles received?
- **Outstanding articles** – which of your articles are in the top percentile of comparable articles?
- **h-index** – this rates your entire publication career based on both output and citation impact. (An h-index of 11 indicates that 11 of a researcher's articles have each received at least 11 citations.)

## 8.2 MY RESEARCH DASHBOARD

Every author who's published at least one article with Elsevier in the last 10 years will now be invited to register for a personalized dashboard offering:

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- A comparison of your article's performance against others

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“The dashboard presents the impact data in a clear and compelling manner. It makes me feel like authoring more articles. Thanks, this is so motivating!”

ALAN SHEMI,  
School of Chemical and Metallurgical  
Engineering, University of the  
Witwatersrand, Author International  
Journal of Mineral Processing



My Research Dashboard: A personal and real time feedback service to authors. Combining metrics dating back 10 years. Including Elsevier and non-Elsevier publications.

- **CiteAlert**, a weekly service that automatically notifies you by email when your work is cited by an article in an Elsevier-published journal.
- **Article Usage Alerts**, a quarterly email for authors notifying them of the usage of their article for the first year after publication.



### 8.3 ALTMETRICS

Who’s talking about papers online – and what are they saying? Altmetrics, an alternative way to measure impact promptly after publication, allows you to track and analyze the online activity around your article.

Online article mentions are monitored from social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and more); science blogs; reference managers, such as Mendeley; mainstream media outlets, including the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and non-English language publications such as *Die Zeit* and *Le Monde*; and special interest publications such as *Scientific American* and *New Scientist*.

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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*Department of Pediatrics, Leiden University  
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## Further information and training

| 10

### 10.1 PUBLISHING CAMPUS

The Elsevier Publishing Campus website gives information, advice and training resources to anyone pursuing a career in academia, including teachers and tutors. The Campus offers career advice and shows how you can make the most of the opportunities that come your way. Online lectures cover topics and trends in research, while regular blogs detail industry big ideas like open science, open access and big data. The Campus can help to boost essential publishing skills, such as writing, reviewing and grantwriting, and plenty of tips and tricks are offered by industry experts. Certificates of completion are awarded for the Campus' interactive training courses; these can be added to your CV, to show how far you've come on your research journey.

For more information see [publishingcampus.com](https://publishingcampus.com).

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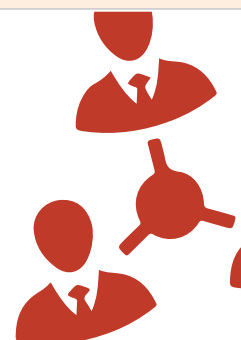
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