

Responsible Conduct in Conducting and Publishing Research

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Before beginning their research, authors must obtain Institutional Review Board permission. Then they should conduct their research with scrupulous attention to detail. Before authors submit their manuscripts for peer review, they should obtain the Manuscript Submission Guidelines for their target journal and read a few articles in that journal to determine whether their study is a good fit for the journal. Authors should describe their research design and methodology in sufficient detail so that other researchers can duplicate their study. Results should be explained clearly and implications should be based on the results. Reviewers are advised to stay informed of their specialty and be ready to acknowledge new directions. Editors should seek to move the profession forward by publishing both empirical research and invited papers written by experts. Each person (author, reviewer, and Editor) must operate in good faith.

Keywords: *ethics; ethical behavior; plagiarism; Institutional Review Board; responsible conduct*

The goal of authors, reviewers, editors, and others involved in research should be “to ensure the accuracy of scientific knowledge, to protect the rights and welfare of research participants, and to protect intellectual property rights” (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 11). In the peer review process, the Editor, Associate Editors, and reviewers try to accomplish these goals.

A first step in conducting research is for the author to obtain Institutional Review Board permission for their study. When an author submits a manuscript to a journal, he or she must submit a copy of the IRB permission. As Editor, I review each IRB statement to learn the topic of the research, who granted permission, who received permission, and when permission was received. If the date is old and the author’s name does not appear on the IRB or the topic doesn’t match the manuscript, I follow up with the institution.

After I have checked the IRB, I assign the manuscript to an Associate Editor in that specialty (e.g. nutrition, housing, personal finance). Then the Associate Editor invites reviewers who are knowledgeable about the topic and the methodology. I expect that reviewers will evaluate each section of the manuscript: purpose, review of literature, theoretical framework, methodology, results, implications, limitations, references, tables, and figures. The reviewers’ comments will enable the Associate Editor and the Editor to make a decision about the manuscript.

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Should it be revised, accepted, or rejected? If the decision is to revise, the reviewers' comments will help the author to improve the manuscript.

If an author receives an invitation to revise and resubmit, he or she should make every effort to follow the suggestions of the reviewers. The author needs to respond to the reviewers' comments. The only person who should be in contact with the Editor is the corresponding author.

Authors should be diligent in providing complete details about their sources. Figures from other research must be clearly identified. Authors must give credit to the original source of concepts and theories. When citing findings from previous research, authors must be careful to credit the source. Authors must also be careful not to "self-plagiarize." That means not using their own published papers verbatim or only slightly revised in additional papers.

In their research, authors must follow the appropriate procedures. This is, especially important with studies that involve human subjects. Authors should explain in the methodology section how they developed their sample, whether incentives were involved, what benefits were possible for subjects, and other pertinent information. Authors should explain how many individuals were invited to participate and how many actually participated.

Another important point is the determination of authorship. At the beginning of the study, I believe the principle investigator should have a discussion with each person who will be involved. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of colleagues and graduate students.

It is beneficial for graduate students to begin publishing before they complete their degrees. Participating in research and having their name included as a coauthor will expand their skills and boost their confidence.

I am familiar with a journal that has a paragraph at the end of the article in which each author's contribution is explained. For example, if the title page included Professors Brown, Jones, and Smith, the citation might read as follows: Dr. Brown conceptualized the research question and wrote the review of literature, Dr. Jones collected and analyzed the data, and Dr. Smith wrote the summary and implications. I think this is an excellent policy. I would like to hear your thoughts on this subject.

When an author submits a manuscript, he or she is asked to indicate that the manuscript will not be submitted to another journal or to a conference while the manuscript is under review. Recently, I have encountered violations of this requirement. This behavior is unprofessional and unethical.

Finally, what about the person who "picks the brain" of a colleague and then turns their colleague's idea into a self-authored study? It is impossible for a reviewer or an Editor to know if this has occurred. If authors practice ethical behavior as they conduct their own research and as they train their graduate students, they will be respected and their research should be a credit to the profession. The goals of academic research as stated in the first paragraph (accuracy of scientific knowledge, protecting rights and welfare of participants, and protecting intellectual property rights) will be met.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.