

This Site I Like

BioMed Central author academy

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/authors/authoracademy>

The BioMed Central website has been recently described in this journal by Stefan Busch and Sandra Lê (November 2012 issue). An interesting section, which deserves a more detailed explanation, is 'BioMed Central author academy'. Although focused on BioMed Central journals, even editors of other journals could take advantage of this section the better to prepare authors for publication or simply to give them advice to improve their scientific English language and the structure of the article itself.

It is well known that good English increases the probability of an article's being accepted, understood, discussed, and trusted: dedicated to this topic is the 'Overcoming language barriers' section, which gives several suggestions to make the language as simple, clear, and concise as possible, together with some grammar rules and common mistakes in scientific articles.

A list of the main topics of the website is present in the left sidebar. The 'Choose a target journal' section provides a really interesting tool. Copying and pasting the abstract of an article to be submitted, or just a brief description of the article, makes a button return a short list of the most suitable journals for the article submission among 350 open access journals published by BioMed Central, Chemistry Central, and SpringerOpen (several with an impact factor, see the complete list at <http://www.biomedcentral.com/about/faq/impactfactor>).

Every section of an original article, following the IMRaD structure, is analysed in detail, completed by several examples and further enriched by tips and suggestions.

For example, 'Structuring your manuscript' and 'Writing titles and abstract' provide some useful suggestions about the best way to organise and write a research article. This advice can be used by editors as a check list to evaluate the credibility of an article submitted to their journal: for example, is the title as descriptive as possible? Does the structure of the article give a logical flow to the content?

Two additional pages help in planning a good study design, and writing the parts of the article in a logical order (different from the reading order).

Furthermore, a useful page on ethical standards lists the behaviours authors should avoid: sometimes even skilled scientists may not know, for example, that reproducing entire pieces of an article already published by themselves with another publishing house is not allowed. Similarly, they may submit an article to several journals, possibly not knowing that this is unethical, as well as being a waste of time both for editors and referees. This page is useful also for editors, who

could take advantage of the suggestions to detect plagiarism.

A frequently underestimated part of submitting an article is the cover letter: this is very important as it is the first presentation of the work and of the author him/herself. Some journals specify their requirements in the instructions for authors, but even if not specifically indicated, it is always wise to highlight the innovative elements of the findings and to explain why the article is thought to be suitable for that journal and as a particular publication type. The cover letter should end with a sentence stating that the authors have followed the ethical standards for publication (ie, the article wasn't submitted to other journals or published elsewhere and all the authors agree with the submission).

Finally, a page on peer reviewing explains the aims of this procedure, that is too often seen as intimidating by authors: on the contrary, it should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the scientific quality of their article; besides, authors should be aware that they always retain the possibility to appeal, explaining why they disagree with some points highlighted by the referees. Of course, peer review is an essential tool for editors, not only because it's a great help in selecting adequate manuscripts, but also because referees can sometimes give valuable advice on topics that can be reported upon with success in the journal.

A possible rejection of the manuscript could come from the editors, and a useful list of the reasons for editorial rejection is presented in this section of the website.

This section is not only useful for authors, who are given advice for every step of publishing an article, but also for editors, both indirectly, through the improvement of the quality of articles received from authors, and directly, thanks to the tricks and the useful tools suggested and provided.

Laura Fascio Pecetto
SEEd Medical Publishers, Torino, Italy
laura.fasciopecetto@gmail.com