

A Word About Impact Factors

One of several types of data published by Thompson Scientific, the impact factor, is a measure of how frequently the "average article" in a given journal has been cited in a particular year or other time period. The impact factor, which is updated annually, is calculated by dividing the number of current-year citations by the number of citable items published in that journal during the previous two years.

Although the impact factor is often used to provide a gross approximation of the prestige of a journal, many other factors can influence a journal's impact and ranking.

For example, review articles are generally cited more frequently than research articles are, because the former often serve as surrogates for earlier literature, especially in journals that discourage extensive bibliographies. The inclusion of review articles in a journal will, therefore, increase its impact factor.

Other methods for measuring citations include Google Scholar and Cross Ref. The United Kingdom Serials Group is promoting the "usage factor" (<http://www.uksg.org>) and Google has developed the "Y factor" (<http://www.soe.ucsc.edu/~okram/papers/journal-status.pdf>).



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GETTING PUBLISHED AND INCREASING YOUR VISIBILITY

Your scientific success hinges on your ability to produce a body of publications that your colleagues will notice and respect and that granting agencies will accept as proof of your research accomplishments. You are also, to some extent, responsible for the publication success of your postdocs and graduate students. After several years of graduate school and postdoctoral research, you should be familiar with writing scientific papers and the peer-review process for scientific publishing. This flier and the next one provide some tips on planning for publication and some tricks of the trade to help you get your work published.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

This section reviews some of the basics of the publishing process.

Types of Journals

Within the broad category of peer-reviewed journals, individual journals vary in the audience they try to reach and in the scope of coverage they provide. For example, some journals—typically the top-tier journals—focus on a broad scientific audience.

Others are deliberately narrower in scope, publishing research within a scientific specialty. In addition, a hierarchy exists within the world of scientific publishing.

Some journals are more prestigious than others are, a situation that is dictated in part by each journal's impact factor—a measure of how frequently papers published in that journal are cited in other papers. The more prestigious the journal, the more competitive its publication process is.

Communication Formats

In scientific journals, primary research holds center stage, although significant space is often allocated to reviews and commentaries. Depending on how complete the study is, original research can be published in a variety of formats, including full-length articles, brief communications, technical comments, or even letters to the editor.