



Writer's Camp



Cultivating the Publishable Writer Within

By Faith A. Tissot, RN, MSN, CCRN

Writer's Camp Guest Counselor

Faith Tissot is a PhD learner at Texas Woman's University. She has previously worked as an adjunct professor at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York, and as a registered nurse at St. Francis Hospital, Port Washington, New York. In her nursing career, she has specialized in cardiac surgery and non-invasive cardiology. Faith is eager to share what she has learned through personal experience with fellow learners and scholars.

Understanding the differences between academic papers and journal manuscripts is essential for publication success.

“Write about what you know.” “This is a well-written paper; you should consider submitting it for publication.” These are common positive statements learners receive from seasoned professors who have been successful in publishing in respected peer-reviewed nursing journals. Budding scholars can be encouraged by this advice when they receive it. However, without proper guidance, knowledge of the nuances of publishing, and obtaining pre-

submission critiques from colleagues and mentors, you might be missing valuable information that is necessary to transform your manuscript into an article that is suitable for publication.

Publication is Important

An essential element of the research process is publication. Doctoral learners read, write, and submit plenty of assignments and papers to fulfill course requirements. However, it is fundamental to publication success to recognize that writing for a class assignment and writing for publication are two distinct writing styles and processes. It is imperative to understand the differences and adjust your writing style accordingly.¹

The first step is to be patient with yourself and recognize that you are not alone in this endeavor; a goal of writing for publication can be accomplished with the right approach and resources. The second step is to commit to investing in your personal growth by devoting the time that is necessary to learn to write for publication. This can be done by writing daily, even if only for 10 minutes. You will be making progress in organizing and gathering your thoughts, and you will gain personal satisfaction from meeting goals that you have set for yourself. Third, sign up for email notifications from **Writer's Camp**. Writer's Camp provides valuable and pertinent information that guides and teaches budding scholars how to correctly transform writing for course assignments to writing for publication.

Assignments vs. Articles: Key Differences

Course assignments are written to showcase understanding of course content, develop a novel perspective through the blend of material, or present a coherent argument in support of a specific claim.² Professors are seeking the synthesis of knowledge within written assignments. Their comments, both positive and negative, reflect their understanding and achievement of the objectives that were established to meet course requirements. This is valuable feedback that we receive as learners. Sometimes I think we don't fully appreciate the information that is shared—I know I have been guilty of this, especially with comments that sting.

Publishing in a scholarly journal has a different objective. As learners, when we aim to transform our submitted assignments into publications, we need to transition our writing from reflecting on material we have learned to contributing new insights pertinent to clinical practice, research, or education.²

The organization, tone, flow, voice, and layout of a publishable manuscript will also differ from a course assignment. As an author, the goal should be to present innovative and novel ideas. The language and vernacular used in a journal manuscript must strike a balance between limiting personal pronouns to allow the author to retreat to the background. It is better to position the spotlight on the topic or subject. This displays a sense of subject importance and a less ego-driven agenda.³

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that when writing for publication, you as the author should display a level of tangible respect for the journal's audience to keep their attention. An appearance of authority can offend your audience and create an assumption of reader inexperience. Adopting a tone

of exchanging information between colleagues leaves room for readers who may have more experience than you regarding the subject matter and sets the stage for offering sage wisdom and advice.³

Insights Gained Through Personal Experiences

Over the past year, I submitted three manuscripts for publication; all three were desk-rejected. I was unaware that removing the cover page and submitting work that was written for a final paper at the end of an academic course did not translate into publishable content. After the third rejection, it was time to take a personal inventory and learn what I was doing wrong.

The source of the problem was that I did not possess the essential skill set to transform my manuscript into a publishable article. Following enrollment in the “Writing for Publication” course provided by my university and with the guidance and patience of colleagues I have met here at Writer’s Camp, I began the process of learning from my mistakes and improving my skills.

Devoting the time necessary to follow the step-by-step process outlined in the *Manuscript Success*⁴ series, was key to understanding and achieving success in producing a manuscript that went from submission to peer review to revise and resubmit. I am still working on having something accepted but I believe I am making big strides in the process!

It is essential to note that there will be occasions when journal editors will either decide that your manuscript is not acceptable or requires revisions, whether major or minor. When this happens, you may have feelings of disappointment, confusion, frustration, or perhaps even feel like an impostor.⁵ Conversely, we can choose to view a setback as a tangible sign of bravery and vulnerability by choosing to share our scholarship in print. If we decide not to try, we miss out on the critiques that can help us grow, build resilience, and learn how to get back up and dust ourselves off. We must be open to the opportunity to blossom from the constructive feedback that is necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of scholarly growth and an accepted and published manuscript.⁵

Invest the time required to thoroughly review, digest, and utilize every nugget of information about writing, whether from Writer’s Camp, a friend or mentor, or one of the myriad books that have been written about writing. This will help you develop into a publishable writer and is a priceless gift that you grant yourself. By engaging deeply and identifying areas where errors occurred you will develop a broad understanding of the skills you need to be a successful, published author.⁴

Submit with Confidence

When you believe you have completed the steps necessary and your manuscript is polished, it is time to forward your work to trusted mentors who can critique and serve as pre-submission peer reviewers. After you complete the final edits suggested by these colleagues, review your journal’s specific manuscript submission criteria for authors. Follow the directions for manuscript submission as requested by the journal. Once you have satisfied all of the elements listed exactly as requested, it is time to click “send.”

What Happens Next

After your manuscript is submitted, it will be evaluated for readability and adherence to the standards and scope of the journal. This is usually done by an editorial assistant or managing editor, or it may be the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief, depending on the size of the journal and number of journal staff. When a manuscript has passed the initial review, it will be sent out for peer review. Their feedback assists the editor in making a decision to reject, accept, or request revisions of your manuscript.⁶

If your manuscript makes it to the peer review stage and is not rejected immediately (ie, desk reject), that means you have passed the hurdle of manuscript transformation. Of course, it could still be rejected after peer review but look on the bright side: it could also be accepted. Most likely, if it is not rejected, revisions will be requested. What happens after that is beyond the scope of this article but understand that what you have accomplished already is notable. Enjoy the moment and be proud of yourself!

Conclusion

Transitioning from academic writing for course assignments to writing a manuscript that is suitable for publication requires more than reformatting academic work into a different citation style or adding tables or graphs. It requires a shift in mindset from writing for faculty to writing for peers and colleagues in professional practice, academia, or research. You need to understand your purpose for writing and the population who will benefit from the information that you share. Preparedness, persistence, time, and energy dedicated to the process will eventually lead to success. You can do it!

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