



<http://www.elsevier.com/authors-update/story/publishing-tips/5-ways-you-can-ensure-your-manuscript-avoids-the-desk-reject-pile>

5 ways you can ensure your manuscript avoids the desk reject pile

You've spent months working on your research and putting together your manuscript. You hit 'submit'....then sit back and wait for the journal's decision. You feel a flicker of excitement when the email lands but then you read it: Your submission has been rejected. Why?

Well, editors reject between 30 and 50 percent of the articles submitted to Elsevier journals before they even reach the peer-review stage, and one of the top reasons for rejection is poor language.

Here are five ways to look at your manuscript through the eyes of an editor, with tips to help you avoid the desk reject pile.

1. Sloppy copy

What the editor sees: Typos, grammatical errors and poor punctuation make a lasting impression on the editor. Mistakes do happen, of course, but a manuscript littered with language errors is difficult to read – errors can become so distracting that they get in the way of the content. And frequent errors suggest that you haven't taken the care and attention needed to produce a high-quality manuscript.

How you can avoid rejection: Take care when you're writing, and think carefully as you type. Proofread your manuscript and ask your co-authors to proofread it. Before you submit, it's a good idea to ask someone who has never read the manuscript – perhaps a colleague or a friend – to 'sanity check' it for language and typographical errors. You may also find it helpful to opt for a [professional proofreading service](#).

2. Unclear message

What the editor sees: What are you trying to say about your research? Is your message clear or ambiguous? The editor will be looking for your message, particularly in your abstract. The results you're sharing are important, so don't let them down with unclear writing.

How you can avoid rejection: If you're struggling to get your message across clearly, try breaking it down into smaller chunks. Short sentences can help clarify meaning by removing ambiguity and confusion from your message. You could also opt for simpler language where you want to be clear about your message. Ask a colleague who has not worked on the manuscript to read it and tell you what they think your message is – this will give you an idea of how it comes across. [Professional language services](#) can also help you make your message clearer.

Tools and resources to keep you away from the desk reject pile

3. Inconsistency and inaccuracy

What the editor sees: Inconsistency gives the impression that your manuscript – and your research – is not rigorous. If the statistics in your results section don't match what you discuss in the conclusion, or if your table legend actually refers to the figure on the previous page, the editor will notice.

How you can avoid rejection: Check, check and check again! Before you start writing, make a list of hotspots – where are you likely to get confused? Go through your manuscript in detail, referring back to all the places you refer to the same data, and checking your hotspots. You can use the ctrl+F function in Microsoft Word to help you locate certain words or numbers. Again, a proofreading service may help with this.

4. Unsuitability

What the editor sees: The editor will know immediately if your article is within the scope of the journal or not, and will desk reject on that basis. Many journals have specific sets of rules or criteria for authors, which editors use as a basis for rejection without review.

How you can avoid rejection: Before you submit, check that your manuscript is within the scope of the journal – you can use Elsevier's [Journal Finder](#) to locate the most suitable journals for your work. If it's within scope, read the Guide for Authors (available on the journal homepage on Elsevier.com) to check for journal-specific criteria or guidelines. If your manuscript does not comply, find a different journal to submit to.

5. Unclear impact or novelty

What the editor sees: Depending on the journal, the editor will be looking to understand what's new about your research, and what impact it has on the field. They will be looking for a clear statement explaining to them why your manuscript is important and why they should accept it for publication in their journal.

How you can avoid rejection: Be clear about what your findings say. Think about what you're adding to the knowledge base, and what impact your research has. Your title is a great place to start: is it appealing? Does it reflect the story and the main point of what you want to say? Be careful though – overstating your impact and extrapolating your results could be even more damaging to your chances of success.