

Tips on How to Get Published

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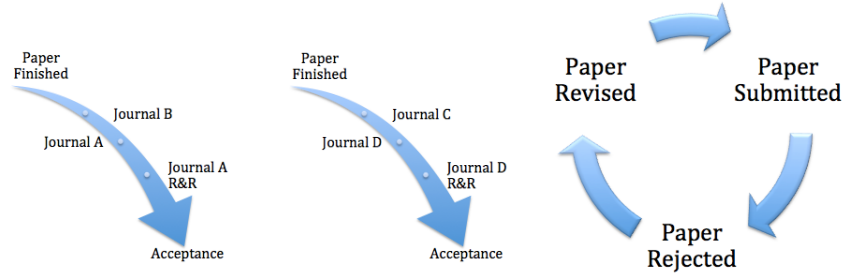
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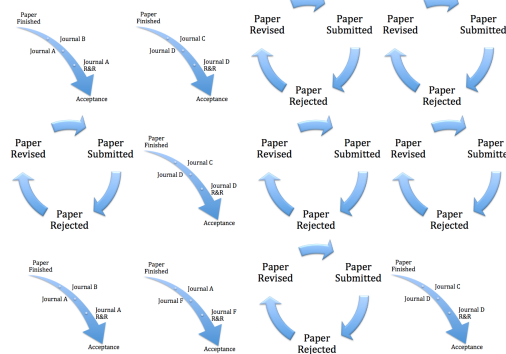
Start a stream of research for which you are recognized

- Requires writing a lot of papers in a particular “area”
- Otherwise your research stream will dry up -



Above, three papers have been written and submitted. The first paper goes to Journal B and is rejected. It is then shipped to Journal A where it receives a revise and resubmit and is ultimately accepted. This is a fairly linear process and might take 6-18 months total. The second paper experiences a similar fate - a rather linear process with only one rejection. The third paper gets stuck in a revolving process of submission, rejection, (slight) revision, submission, and rejection. This third paper is a problem for those on tenure clocks because each round might take 6-12 months and your tenure clock is being eaten up.

How to deal with this? Have multiple papers under development, review, and revision at all times!



Above we see that we have a number of papers that are proceeding fairly linearly through the publication process and several that are stuck in the rotating submission process. If every row is a year of your career, then after three years you would have six papers accepted/in print and six that are in various stages of development, revision, resubmission. At many institutions this number (depending on quality) would be enough to merit re-appointment and maybe even tenure. If each row represents two years of effort then you would be going into the tenure decision with six hits - again, at many schools enough to merit tenure. However, if each row represented three years of effort (or even 2.5 years of effort) then you would likely run out of tenure clock before getting the six acceptances.

There is no denying that the system is somewhat inefficient but it is the system that our field works with and while editors can try to speed up the process to some extent, there is actually relatively little that we as editors can do.

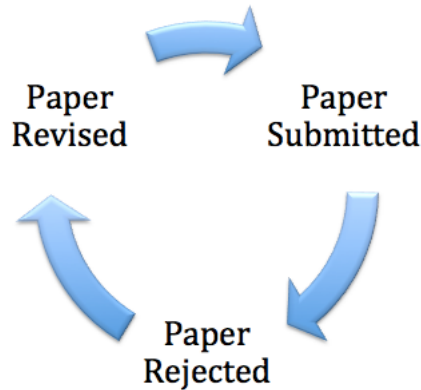
Writing for publication is not natural for most people. It takes a lot of practice to become a good writer. Early in your career you might have a hard time writing. If this is the case, seek out colleagues who are successful publishers and ask them to read your papers and comment on the writing style, grammar, and paper structure.

It is also easier to write a larger number of papers if you have a network of co-authors. Co-authors can come from your dissertation committee, graduate school colleagues, job colleagues, conference meetings, etc. At most schools you will need to

have at least one or two publications on your own and you do not want all of your papers co-authored with the same person.

Tips on How to Get Published: You got to know when to hold ‘em and when to fold ‘em

How many revolutions around this merry-go-round should you take?



- “Do Firms Maximize? Evidence from Professional Football,” *Journal of Political Economy* - started in 2000, working paper released in 2001, published in 2006.

While it can be frustrating to spend six to twelve months (or even longer!) at a journal, this is the nature of the publication process in economics. While there are open-source journals that turn around papers in a much shorter period of time, generally you will wait six to nine months to get an initial decision at the top journals. Thus, it is necessary for you to generate enough papers so that you always have several papers under submission.

If you submit the same basic paper to four journals that, objectively, should be interested in the topic and you have been rejected at each of these journals there is likely something fundamentally wrong with the paper. Either the theory is not correct (math mistakes, etc.), the data are not appropriate for the analysis at hand, or the econometric analysis is flawed (usually through lack of identification). At this point, I would suggest putting the paper in the drawer for a few months and returning to it with a fresh look later. This assumes, of course, that you have other papers underway!

Tips on How to Get Published: Submission process

- Consider opportunity costs for yourself, the editors, the referees
- Keep cover letter short - no long history of the paper and how much you have worked on it and how you are convinced it would be the best fit for the journal.
- Keep paper between 20-25 pages of text.
- Keep writing clear - especially abstract and introduction
- Follow formatting guidelines and submission process - administrative assistants don't know content but they do know process.

A paper that is 20-25 pages (double spaced, 1 in margins all around) is between 10,000 and 11,000 words. Journals are limited in their page allotment and therefore are less inclined (outside the top journals) to publish longer pieces. Referees also have limited time and attention and asking/expecting a high quality referee report on a forty page paper is a tough proposition.

Tips on How to Get Published: Does your paper match the Aims and Scope of the Journal?

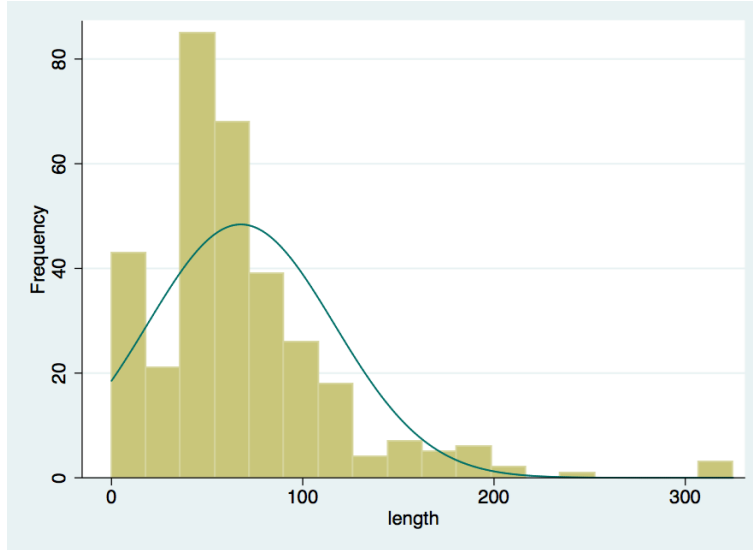
- Titles for 357 submissions to CEP July 2011- June 2013

Tips on How to Get Published: Submission process

- Seek information on how papers fare at the journal - length of time under review, acceptance rate

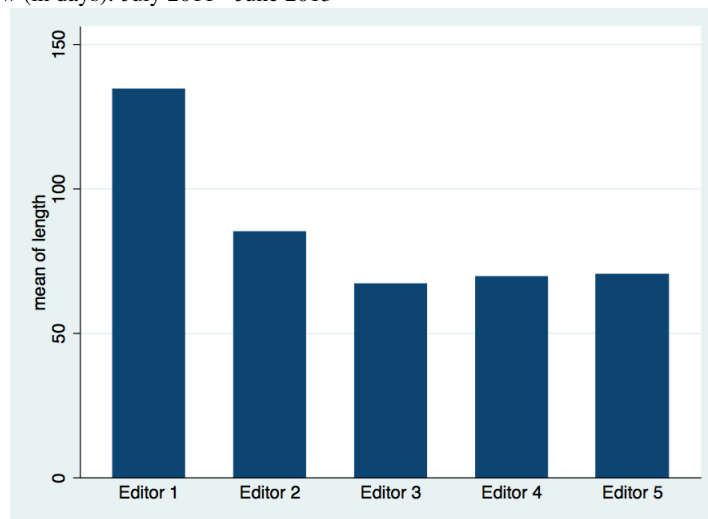
Tips on How to Get Published: Submission process

Length of time in review (in days): July 2011 - June 2013



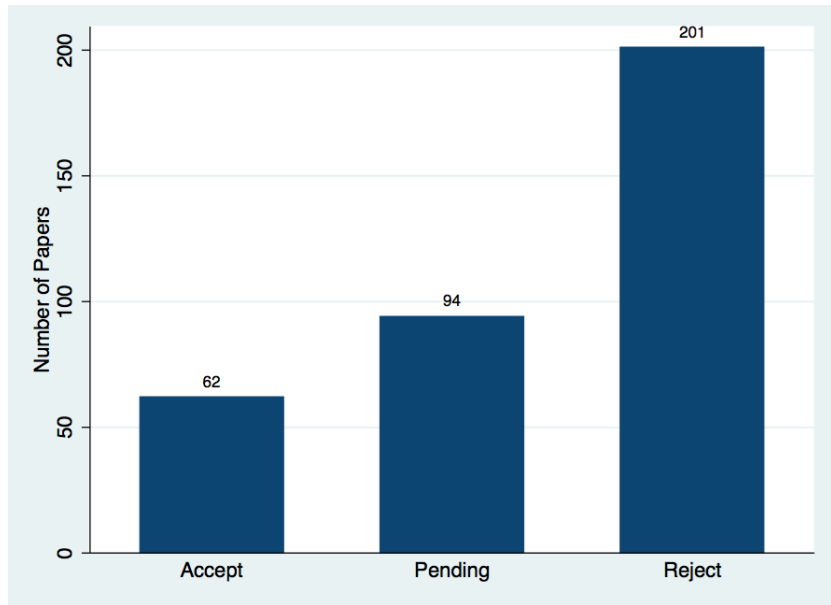
Tips on How to Get Published: Submission process

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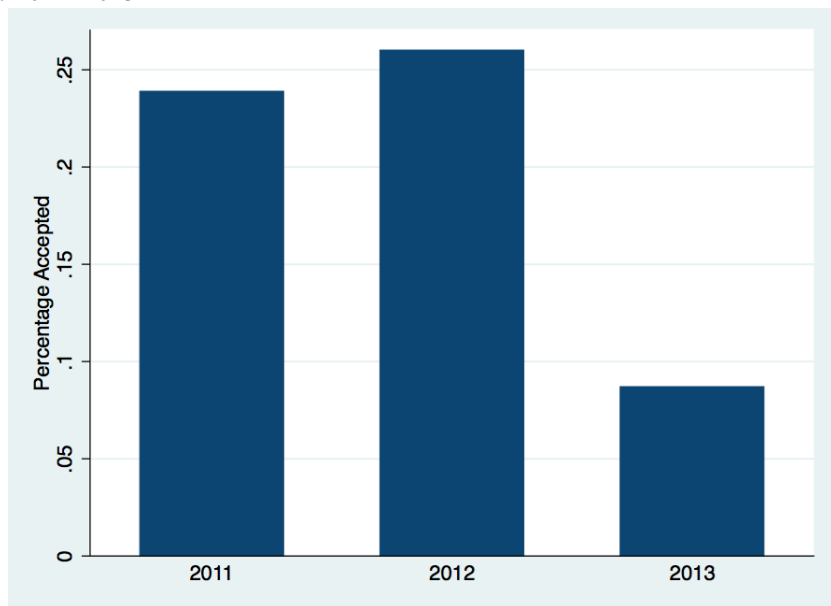


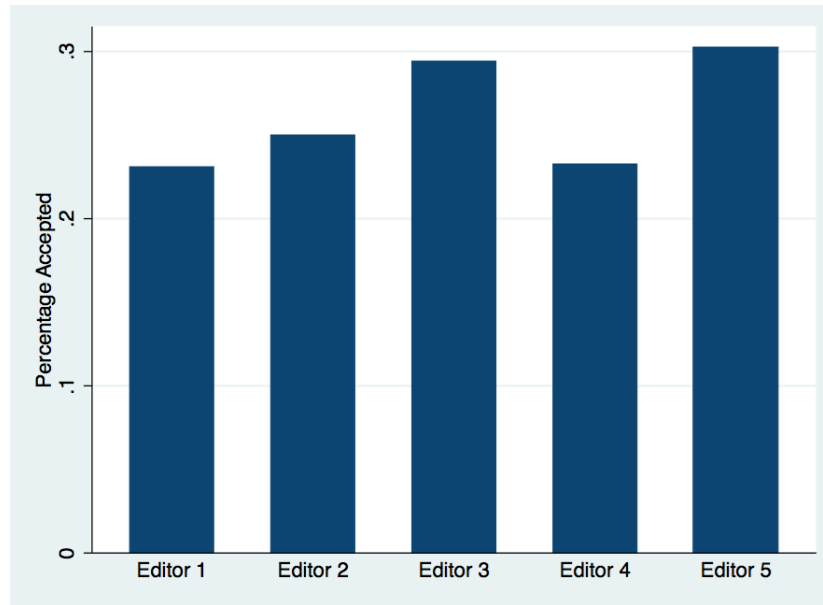
The editorial staff at CEP explicitly aims to keep the review process as short as possible while ensuring that we recruit quality referees and good referee reports. Many journals might be much longer on average - perhaps don't worry about contacting an editor until after four months, maybe six months at most journals.

Contemporary Economic Policy: Status and Acceptance Rate: July 2011 - June 2013



Acceptance Rates: 2011- 2013





Acceptance rates are low at almost all economics journals. Why this is the case is not immediately clear. Some suggest that lower acceptance rates are correlated with journal rankings and therefore some journals artificially keep acceptance rates low. I have never been told that there is a quota at the journal or that certain papers needed to be rejected as part of a quota system.

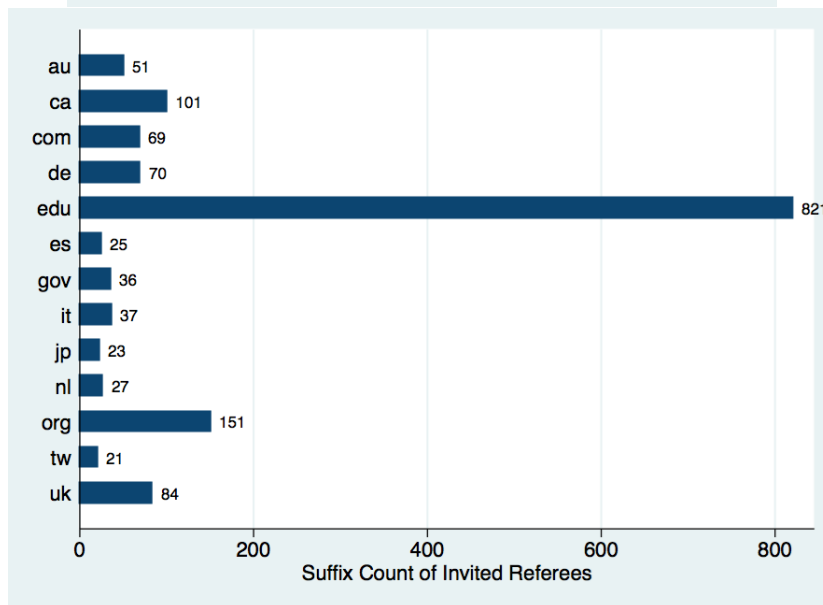
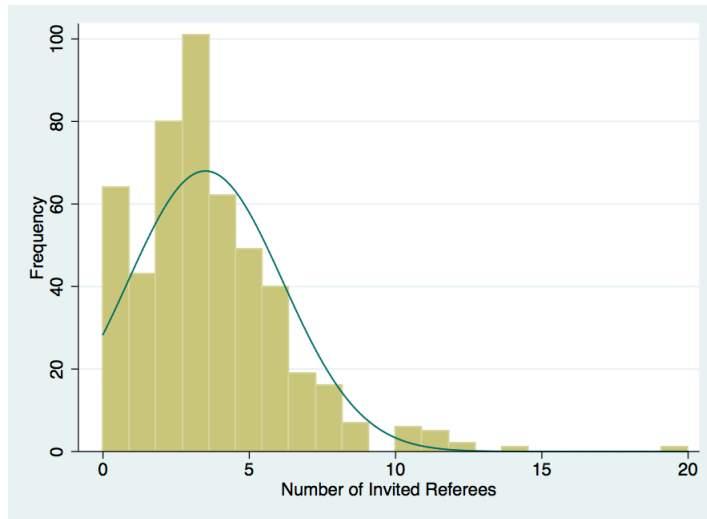
That said, the journals are limited in their page count, there are more economists world wide that are now required to publish in order to earn tenure, merit raises, etc. and therefore there are increased numbers of submissions to all journals. This, in turn, puts greater pressure on the marginal paper and likely pushes the quality of the marginally accepted paper to the right (that is toward higher quality).

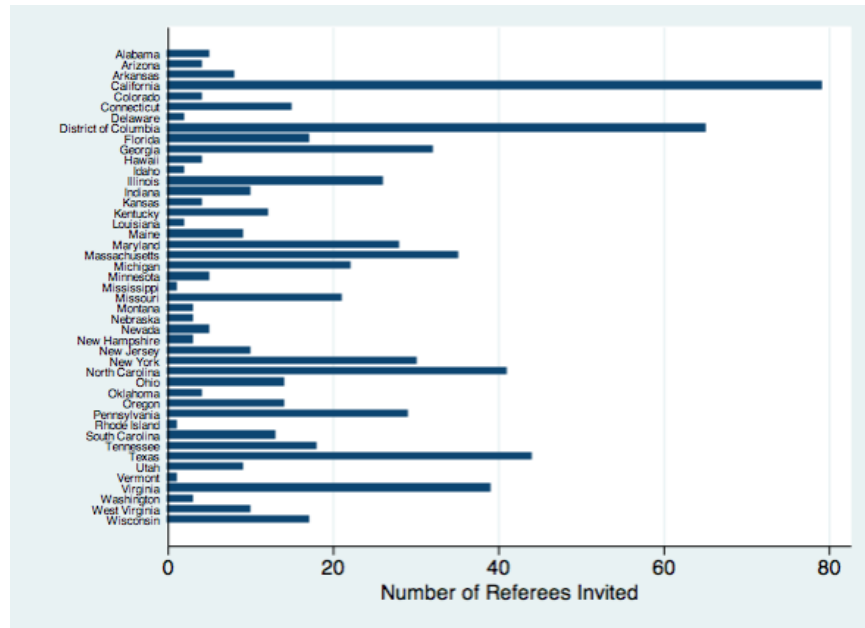
The sad truth for young (all?) scholars is that the default is that you are going to be rejected. The challenge is to (a) write a paper that journal editors, referees, and ultimately readers will be interested in, (b) choose an appropriate journal that is not too low in quality and not too high in quality (the former will devalue your paper, the latter will lead to longer delays in publication if you are not accepted there). Those who are on a tenure clock need to be very selective on where you submit so to maximize the impact of the paper while balancing the fact that it can take a long time to get the paper accepted and in print.

Tips on How to Get Published: Evaluation process

- Do you expect peer review or peer acceptance?
- It is tough to decide when to come back to the editor when you receive a bad review
- Rejection means the paper was not successful - is it the paper or the reader?
- Complaining about referees is tempting but not very productive unless you are aware of personal animus.

Invited Referees per Paper





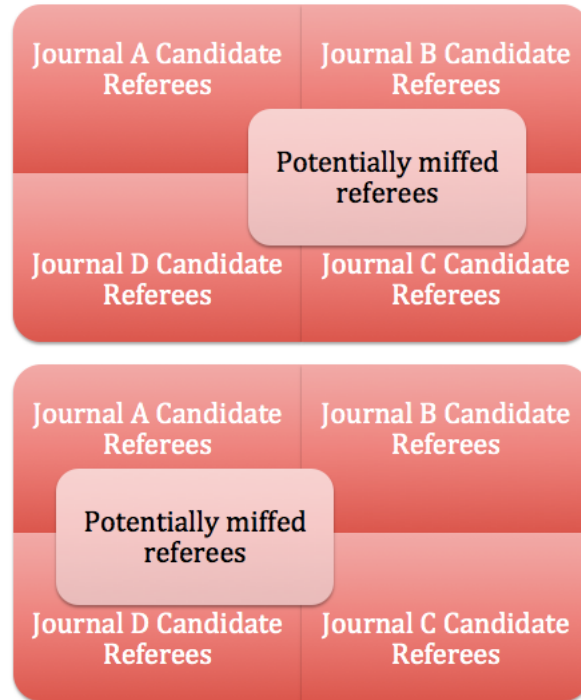
Be careful in complaining about referees as you generally do not know who they are. Personally, I aim very high with referees. I generally invite an three referees for each paper and 75% of the time one of those is going to be one of the top scholars in the paper’s field (to include Nobel laureates). Thus, if you complain about a referee’s misinterpretation of your paper it might be that you are complaining about a very good economist. Can referees make mistakes? Of course, but generally the process seems to work well on average.

If you are rejected with one or more referee reports that are generally positive, and this has happened to all of us, you have fallen to the editorial decision of the editor. Complaining to the editor about their decision to not publish your paper, for whatever reason (short of personal animus), is likely to be unsuccessful.

Tips on How to Get Published: What? The Journal Rejected Your Paper?

- Rejection does not mean that you don’t revise





Tips on How to Get Published: Revision process

- If invited to revise and resubmit - try to finish revisions within 6 months. Let editor know if that’s not feasible.
- Deal with referee suggestions in a serious manner - but you don’t have to do everything the referees suggest
- Revisions are often viewed as temporarily delayed acceptances - this is not the case!

Tips on How to Get Published: Revision process

- Respond to each referee in a common document
- Respond to each referee’s points (minor and major) explaining exactly how you responded and what you did to address their concern.

What’s in a Title?

- Titles are important and you would do well to spend some time on your paper title
- Witty titles can work but run the risk of devaluing the product
- Long titles can turn off referees and readers alike
- Short titles can lead to mistaken priors about what the paper is about

What’s in a Title?

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
titlelen	357	79.33613	26.58132	26	194
titlewords	357	11.33333	4.003276	4	28
colon	357	.4089636	.4923325	0	1
hyphen	357	.2436975	.4299148	0	1
question	357	.1904762	.3932279	0	1

What's in a Title?

accept	dF/dx	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	x-bar	[95% C.I.]
titlelen	-.0006446	.0015601	-0.42	0.678	79.3726	-.003702	.002413	
tileless10*	-.106835	.0739278	-1.35	0.177	.334601	-.251731	.038061	
colon*	.1186036	.0497636	2.52	0.012	.422053	.021069	.216138	
hyphen*	-.0892288	.0602263	-1.32	0.186	.235741	-.20727	.028813	
question*	.0457033	.0611597	0.78	0.438	.18251	-.074168	.165574	
usa*	.1290342	.0232135	5.53	0.000	.51711	.083537	.174532	
vice*	.1163075	.0727061	1.75	0.080	.064639	-.026194	.258809	
sports*	.1105984	.0915686	1.32	0.186	.045627	-.068873	.290069	
_Iy~2012*	-.0245264	.0262077	-0.94	0.347	.48289	-.075892	.02684	
_Iy~2013*	-.1987551	.0373596	-3.40	0.001	.087452	-.271979	-.125532	
december*	-.0970679	.0352662	-2.15	0.032	.148289	-.166188	-.027947	
obs. P	.2357414							
pred. P	.2145429	(at x-bar)						

The above is my silly regression for the presentation. It is a probit model where the dependent variable takes a value of one if the paper was accepted and zero if rejected. The results reported are marginal effects. You can see that title length seems to have no impact on the odds of publication but a title less than ten words has a negative impact on the odds of publication (one-sided p-value = .08).

Having a colon in the title, which, if used in a grammatically correct fashion, indicates that there is more explanation in the title than might be otherwise, has a positive correlation with being accepted. On the other hand, having a hyphen, which might be correlated with more complicated or nuanced titles, is weakly correlated with being rejected.

Being a US-based author gives you an advantage at CEP and, perhaps more important for the audience, if your paper deals with vice (sex, drugs, smoking, alcohol, or guns), then you have a higher probability of being accepted. This makes sense given the journal's aims and scope.

Of course, this model is silly because it does not control for what the paper actually entails and how well the paper is written!