

Writing Your Journal Article in 12 weeks:

A Guide to Academic Publishing Success

Consider the scene: You have finished your research report/MSc dissertation/PhD and your manager/supervisor/employer asks ‘have you published?’ What do you do? Where do you start? How do you condense many months and possibly years of work into one 3000 word article fit for publication? Many will recognise this scenario as the ever increasing pressure (in academia and clinical practice) to publish in high impact quality journals grows. The problem is, however, that the publishing world is often shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. Additionally, little guidance for new researchers or clinicians on how they might write an article fit for publication, exists. Another problem is time, or lack of it. Lack of time is one of the most common reasons why those working in academia fail to publish. Although others have attempted to address writing and publication issues, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* offers a fresh approach. In her book, Belcher both demystifies the publication world and offers guidance on managing time.

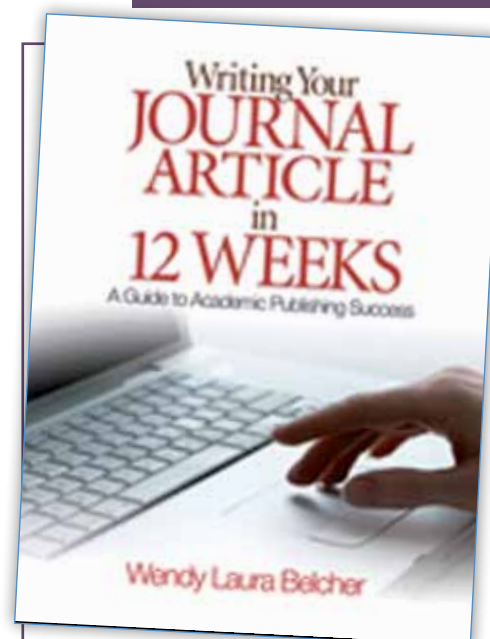
Wendy Laura Belcher is an academic, editor and professor. She has several years’ experience as an academic author and has won several awards for writing. *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 weeks* is a well written workbook, presented in an easy and accessible style. It is the result of a ‘publication focused course’ previously run by Belcher and although written for graduate students and new faculty members, it would be of help to anyone wishing to publish in academic journals.

The aims of the book, in the author’s words, are to help ‘those in the trenches’ to ‘understand the rules of academic publishing’. It is a workbook, where wannabe authors are invited to revise a

piece of academic writing to a standard where it can be submitted for publication. The book is divided into 12 chapters—each chapter corresponds to a week of writing—and contains a comprehensive index, contents page, recommended reading and works cited. There are also chapters on how to use the book and guidance on responding to journal decisions. Each week the reader is asked to complete five specific daily tasks in order to complete their article for publication. There are four types of tasks: workbook tasks, social tasks, writing tasks and planning. The tasks encourage daily writing to bring the reader closer to the goal of completing and submitting a journal article. It is not really for those who want to ‘dip in and out’ for tips on writing, as Belcher states, ‘the learning is in the doing’.

There are a number of central beliefs running through the book, one is that to be successful in writing you must write regularly. Belcher discourages leaving writing to a block of time—to be a writer you must write. She also advocates making writing a social rather than lone activity—sharing ideas, joining a writing group, finding a writing partner—all increase productivity. Belcher, unlike other writers in this area, takes a more macro approach to her advice on writing, concentrating on developing argument and structure, rather than advising on the micro elements of writing, for example syntax and style. Belcher believes that revision of argument, structure and summarising make the biggest difference to an articles quality and therefore success in being published.

In summary, chapters relating to weeks one to four focus on development of the argument and selection of journal, two of the most important considerations in academic writing, according to Belcher. Chapters relating to weeks five to eight, focus on identifying suitable literature and deciding appropriate entry points for the article, that is, where does what you want



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By Wendy Laura Belcher

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to say fit within the existing literature. For those who tend to end up ‘drowning in the literature’ Belcher offers some good advice on strategies for reading and selecting only that literature applicable to your article. Strengthening the structure, presenting the evidence, opening and closing your research article are discussed within chapters relating to weeks six to eight. Weeks nine through to twelve deal with the importance of perseverance and responding to journal decisions: ‘How you respond to journal decisions about your submitted articles will determine your academic career’.

One of the advantages of the book is that it is a workbook. That is, it does provide ‘clear guidance’ on how to publish. If you proceed through the workbook, chapter by chapter, you will have an article that can be sent for publication by the end of 12 weeks. The prescriptive style may not appeal to all.

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