

EDITORIAL

From Draft to Publication: 10 Grounded Tips for Getting Your Work Published

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What does it take to get your paper published?

This is a question we have both been asked countless times—by early-career scholars anxiously preparing their first submission, by doctoral students unsure of when to send their work out into the world, and yes—even by seasoned academics who have grown somewhat weary of reviewer feedback that reads more like code than critique. The truth is, getting published is not a test of academic brilliance; it is a craft. Like all crafts, it requires sustained attention, multiple revisions, and a clear understanding of the scholarly context.

In this editorial, we offer ten grounded and practice-informed tips that reflect our shared editorial experience with *International Sports Studies (ISS)*. These suggestions aim to support authors, especially those working in non-dominant research contexts, such as underrepresented regions or emerging academic institutions, who are eager to strengthen their manuscripts and share their insights with the broader international community. This is not a formula. It is an invitation to reflect, revise, and contribute that meaningfully to scholarly discourse.

1. Know the journal

Understanding your target journal is the foundation of a successful publishing strategy. Too many manuscripts are submitted with little regard for the journal's scope or priorities. *ISS* is an interdisciplinary journal that values cultural insight, critical inquiry, and international relevance. If your work does not align with these values, it may not be a good fit for you. Read the aims. Examine the scope. Scan recent issues. Publishing is not about forcing your work into the wrong venue—it is about joining a community that values your scholarly contribution.

Ask yourself: Have I positioned my manuscript within the values and scope of the journal I am submitting to?

2. Follow author guidelines

Author guidelines exist for an essential purpose—not to make your life difficult, but to facilitate a smooth review and publication workflow for everyone involved in the draft-to-publication process. The task is not about ticking off a checklist of what to do or what to avoid. It is a demonstration of respect—for the journal, for the editors, and for the process. Pay close attention to formatting, structure, referencing style, and file naming conventions. A complete and correctly formatted submission saves time for editors and reviewers. Follow the guidelines as an act of professional courtesy that communicates, “I value your time, and I am ready to be taken seriously.”

Ask yourself: Have I followed the author guidelines thoroughly?

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3. Craft a strong title and abstract

Think of your title and abstract as your first handshake with the reader—they set the tone for everything that follows. That handshake may be your only opportunity to establish engagement. Is your handshake firm, clear, and engaging? Or is it vague and forgettable? A strong title is concise, informative, and engaging. It should capture the core idea of your paper without being excessively technical or cryptic. Meanwhile, the abstract is your best opportunity to tell the reader (and the reviewer) precisely what to expect: what you studied, why it matters, how you did it, and what you found. Avoid obscuring or exaggerating your findings.

Ask yourself: *If someone unfamiliar with my work read only my title and abstract, would they understand my study and why it matters?*

4. Engage critically with the literature

A literature review is not simply a summary of research related to your study; it is a dialogue with past and present scholars. You are not writing in isolation; instead, you are entering a conversation already in progress. Acknowledge the people behind the ideas. Cite foundational works while affirming newer contributions and diverse perspectives. Position your study within the scholarly context—what you reinforce, challenge, or extend. Be mindful of whose voices are included in the review of literature, and whose voices are excluded. After listening carefully to the ongoing discourse, you can identify something meaningful to contribute. This is where your research contribution begins.

Ask yourself: *What has been said before, and what needs to be said now?*

5. Mind the gap

Research begins with curiosity and often with a gap—a verbal space where knowledge is inadequate, assumptions are unchallenged, or diverse perspectives are missing. Your challenge is to frame your work as responding to a gap in a specific conversation. Perhaps it is a population that has been underrepresented, a method that has not been fully tested, or a dominant narrative that warrants reconsideration. Avoid making blanket statements, such as “this has not been studied yet,” which may reveal a lack of engagement with the literature. Research gaps are not holes

to be patched; they are openings to expand knowledge.

Ask yourself: *What specific conversation in the literature does my research extend, challenge, or reframe—and why does it matter now?*

6. Articulate a clear research question

A well-framed research question is the compass of any strong academic paper—it sets the direction and keeps the inquiry focused. Without it, you risk wandering through pages of writing with no clear destination. It also functions as the backbone of your scholarly work; without it, even the most interesting topic can appear confusing or disjointed. A solid research question should flow logically from your engagement with the literature, identifying a specific gap or tension in the field and laying the foundation for your chosen methodology. It informs the reader about the core intent of your research and the significance of your contribution.

Ask yourself: *What exactly am I trying to find out?*

7. Write with clarity and purpose

Academic writing is not a puzzle for the reader to solve. Readers should never have to guess what you mean or why it matters. Make it easy for them to appreciate your work by guiding them through your ideas with purpose. Writing for publication is about making your ideas accessible, precise, and impactful. Avoid jargon unless essential—and define it when you must use it. Explain your ideas concisely. Organise your paper so that each section builds logically on the previous sections. More importantly, write with consideration for your time-constrained readers. Writing well is not about showing off—it is about communicating clearly.

Ask yourself: *Would an informed but non-specialist reader understand what I am saying and why it matters?*

8. Demonstrate methodological rigour

You do not need to employ the most advanced methods to be rigorous in your study. However, your approach must be transparent, systematic, and sound. Describe your research design in detail. Justify your choices. Show how your methods help achieve your research objectives,

answer your research questions, and support the credibility of your findings. Whether you are using quantitative or qualitative approaches, or a mix of both, the goal is to ensure your methods facilitate coherence between your research question, your data, and your interpretation. Rigour is not about complexity—it is about integrity. A clearly explained and well-justified method is more effective than a complex one that is poorly applied.

Ask yourself: *Do my methods demonstrate how I arrived at my findings, and are they appropriate for my research question?*

9. Highlight local insights with global relevance

At *ISS*, we welcome research grounded in specific cultural, national, regional, or community contexts. These local perspectives offer valuable insights, especially when highlighting underrepresented experiences or challenging dominant narratives. However, we also ask, “How are these local perspectives incorporated into the international discourse?” A paper anchored in local realities becomes more significant when it confronts broader issues, such as equity, development, inclusion, or identity. While your work should reflect the distinct particularities of your locality or community, it should be positioned to engage with international or cross-disciplinary discourse. Effective manuscripts do more than describe; they also contextualise. As such, anchor your study in context but extend its relevance.

Ask yourself: *How do my research findings resonate beyond their borders?*

10. Respond to feedback with professionalism

Peer review is not a personal judgement—it is a collaborative process designed to enhance the quality and rigour of your work. Reviewers offer critical insights to refine your arguments, strengthen your methodology, and clarify your contributions. Read their comments with an open mind, even when it is challenging to receive critique. You do not have to agree with every comment, but you do need to respond respectfully and constructively. This means acknowledging the reviewer's perspective,

explaining your reasoning for accepting or rejecting their suggestions, and making revisions that improve the quality and clarity of your work. How you respond to reviewer feedback reveals more than just your ability to revise—it demonstrates your intellectual maturity, openness to dialogue, and commitment to producing robust scholarship.

Ask yourself: *How do I respond to the reviewers' comments for a meaningful improvement of my work?*

Final Thoughts

To publish is not merely to produce a paper. It is to *participate* in a scholarly community with the shared goal of knowledge generation. If there is one central takeaway from these ten tips, it is this: Writing for publication is not about perfection. It is about contribution. And if your work speaks with clarity, rigour, and purpose, it deserves a place in that conversation.

We look forward to reading what you have to say and supporting you on your journey to publication. Remember, at *ISS*, we are committed to helping authors bring their work to publication and advancing of knowledge in the field of sports studies.