



What *JOE* Reviewers Want in *JOE* Submissions

The *Journal of Extension (JOE)* <www.joe.org> is a refereed journal for U.S. Extension professionals. *JOE* reviewers take *JOE* submissions seriously, and they want you to do so, too. Here are some of the things *JOE* reviewers look for in articles (and some of the things they find, instead).

- **Article Quality:** *JOE* reviewers can't review your research or project, itself. They can only review what you have written about it. So ask several colleagues to read your article for clarity and correctness before you submit it. Make sure they evaluate it as a journal article. For instance, don't just submit a truncated version of your thesis. Enlist the help of at least one colleague unfamiliar with your project. Supply these colleagues with copies of the *JOE* Submission Guidelines <<http://www.joe.org/sub1.html>>.
- **Content Relevance:** Some articles are too technical or specific to be relevant to many *JOE* readers. Make your article relevant to as broad an audience of Extension professionals as possible. Answer readers' "so what?" question. Clarify how your article enhances Extension's knowledge base and/or helps U.S. Extension professionals do their jobs better. Good places to accomplish this are your introduction, implication section, and conclusion. If you can't do this, consider submitting your article to a more specialized journal.
- **Focus:** Some articles ramble because authors try to include too many ideas. Stick to one point or theme. A good way to clarify focus is to use a clear heading hierarchy.
- **Rigor:** Some authors don't follow sound sampling and statistical procedures. Don't try to make your article seem more "research based" than it is. Nobody's fooled, and unsound methodology can obscure good ideas and information.
- **Grounded Findings, Recommendations, & Conclusions:** Some authors treat personal opinions as findings or fact. Include personal opinions or values only when appropriate and necessary, make their personal nature clear, and make sure they are based on clear, sound reasoning. Also, separate your findings from your recommendations.
- **Appropriate Graphics:** Some authors include numerous photos and over-elaborate, multicolored charts and tables. This interferes with clarity and presents problems for reviewers (who receive articles for review electronically), Extension staff responsible for formatting and posting *JOE* articles, and readers trying to download articles. Include only graphics that serve an informational rather than aesthetic purpose, and keep your charts and tables as simple as possible. With graphics, less is often more.
- **Effective Titles & Abstracts:** Some titles are dull and too long, and some abstracts are exhaustive recapitulations. Write attention-getting, interesting, and to-the-point titles and abstracts.
- **Submission Guidelines:** Some authors don't follow the *JOE* Submission Guidelines <www.joe.org/sub1.html>, or they have followed an outdated version. Consult the guidelines as you write and just before you submit your article.



Tips for Writing for the *Journal of Extension*

The *Journal of Extension (JOE)* is the official refereed journal of the nationwide Cooperative Extension System. *JOE* is published in electronic format only and is accessed on the Web at www.joe.org.

JOE is a peer-reviewed journal that expands and updates the research and knowledge base for Extension professionals and other adult educators. The purpose of writing for *JOE* is to share with your colleagues successful educational applications, original and applied research findings, scholarly opinions, educational resources, and challenges on issues of critical importance to Extension educators.

- **Become familiar with *JOE* by reading it.** You can access the current issue and back issues at www.joe.org. From there you can also find the *JOE* submission guidelines and other useful information about the journal.
- **Follow the submission guidelines.** They contain information on types and lengths of articles appropriate for *JOE*, the style manual used by *JOE*, and submission and layout formats and procedures. The guidelines are regularly updated, so it's a good idea to check them before you start writing and also before you submit your article.
- **Plan your article for the broadest possible audience of Extension professionals.**
- **Write your article with the Web and on-screen reading in mind.** Favor active voice over passive voice. Use shorter sentences and paragraphs, and more bullet and numbered lists than are conventional in traditional, on-paper journals. Brevity and clarity, the hallmarks of effective writing, are even more important on the Web.
- **Keep a clear and narrow focus by sticking to one main point or theme.** Make sure your article "flows" well and is easy to follow and understand.
- **Remember the basics.** Place any literature review near your introduction; keep your findings and recommendations separate; base your recommendations and conclusions on your findings; and make sure your citations and references conform to *JOE* style.
- **Develop an effective title,** one that's brief, that "catches the eye," and that indicates the content of your article.
- **Ask at least one colleague to review your article** to ensure that it's as good as you can make it before it goes through the formal *JOE* review process.
- **Choose a "lead" or corresponding author** if your article has multiple authors.
- **See these *JOE* articles** for more publishing advice: "Publishing Research in Extension" www.joe.org/joe/1998june/tt2.html and "How to Get Published in a Professional Journal" www.joe.org/joe/1990fall/tt2.html.



Publishing in Extension and Other Scholarly Journals

Rebecca J. Travnichek, Cynthia B. Torppa, and Barbara O'Neill

Following a structured five-step process can help you successfully publish in scholarly journals. Writing a publication can be a daunting task for many Extension Family and Consumer Sciences professionals. This article provides Extension educators with information and basic tips on writing journal articles to share research results and program methods and impact.

Introduction

As professionals, it is our responsibility to share the quality work of the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) profession. We monitor our stakeholders' needs and keep abreast of emerging trends. We design educational programs that are firmly grounded in cutting edge research findings to address those needs and trends. We evaluate programs to determine if our audiences increased their knowledge and, as a result, positively changed their behavior. We also evaluate our work to learn new and more effective ways of presenting research-based information. It is important to publish the work of Family and Consumer Sciences professionals to inform other professionals about the outcomes of our programming and to impact on learner knowledge and behavior. It is also important to share our applied research and impacts of our programs. The purpose of this article is to encourage FCS professionals to publish successful and sometimes unsuccessful program results and impact. There are many journals and other outlets that provide opportunities to publish your work. The following information provides a few tips to guide your thinking about the process of getting published.

What Can I Publish?

As a FCS professional and educator, you have many options from which to choose to publish program methods and impact-related findings. Some potential areas include:

- Needs assessment findings;
- Program evaluation results;
- Evaluation instruments—what worked, what did not;
- Successful delivery methods in reaching diverse audiences;
- Incorporating technology in a new manner;
- Successful marketing ideas; and
- A replicable project/program.

Begin where you are right now. What are you currently working on? Which program(s) are you teaching? Are you doing an evaluation of the program? Did the evaluation show anything important, special, or unique about the program topic, delivery method, marketing technique, or learner behavior? Did you learn something unexpected during the needs assessment process or in a program follow-up evaluation that you think other Extension professionals would find beneficial? Can your program(s) be easily described and replicated by others?

What excites you within your specialization area? Have you written a newsletter or series of newspaper articles about a topic you are really interested in? Are there new and emerging issues? Is there an issue especially important to Cooperative Extension nationally? Is there an issue especially important within your state, county, or community that FCS education should address, and can it be applied to other states as well? Are you already writing information/ results to be published? Can you turn a newsletter/newspaper article into a fact sheet or a fact sheet into a research project or a research project into a refereed journal article? These are just a few questions you should be asking yourself to assist in developing ideas for publishing possibilities (Bucholtz, 2006; Hewlett, 2002; McIntrye, et al., 2007).

Self-confidence as a writer is a motivational hurdle many of us are hesitant to leap. We ask ourselves: What if no one reads what I wrote? What if an editor or reviewer rejects my work quickly? Building the self-confidence of a writer can be achieved by extending experience in writing from newspaper articles to newsletters to research articles. Seeing your own name in print and celebrating this fact with family, friends, colleagues, and administrators is not only a confidence builder, it may serve as the lead idea for your next writing venture.

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How Do I Get Started?

Once you have chosen an issue, program, or evaluation results that you want to write about and the outcomes you want to describe (you achieved the outcomes in the study, now you want to share them), it is time to outline your journal article/study/project. Five steps in the writing process that you will need to consider include:

1. Conduct a literature review,
2. Analyze possible journals for publishing your work,
3. Read Editor's Pages or submission guidelines for journals,
4. Review Human Subject Policies and Procedures (if applicable), and
5. Submit for publication consideration.

1. Conducting a Literature Review

Narrow your search to the topic/subject you are reviewing. This will save you a lot of time. In most cases you can access your library's database of research articles from your office or home computer. Moreover, it is likely that you can download and print most of the research articles you will need for your literature review. A search engine for research studies such as Google Scholar can be a valuable resource.

In reviewing sources in the library, be sure to use primary sources. These include nationally recognized sources of statistics, research, and information (e.g., the Statistical Abstract of the United States and professional journals). Avoid secondary sources and non-scholarly sources including fact sheets, newspapers, and popular magazines. Sources should be current (within the last five years, unless the source is considered a classic in the field of study).

Questions to consider during your literature review include: What's new on the topic of my study? What will my study contribute to the body of knowledge? What would professional colleagues want to know? What impact am I having with educational programming that will help my peers do their jobs more effectively and efficiently? Does the review of literature support my study/program/project methodology? The review of literature should reinforce/support your statement of work—purpose of the study/program/project.

Read publications related to your research/study/project of interest. Reading published works from colleagues in your research area of interest will support your research-based knowledge of the work you are publishing. This will also provide you with background knowledge of the subject, and styles of writing effective journal articles; as well as furthering your own depth of knowledge in your area of specialization.

2. Analyzing Journals for Publishing

While reviewing research articles in scholarly journals for your literature review, take note of the type of articles each journal publishes. If they are relevant to your

article/work/study, you might consider them as publishing outlets. You will increase your success if you know which journals would be interested in your submission. For example, do not send an essay to a journal that only publishes empirical studies nor send a study testing a theory to a journal that specializes in applied work.

According to McIntyre, Eckermann, Keane, Magarey, and Roeger (2007), you want to select a journal that fits your work and reaches the audience you are targeting before you begin writing. Baker (2007), Kelner (2007), Dobie (2004), and O'Neill (1990) share the perspective that it is important to investigate a publishing outlet prior to starting the writing process. There are several journals you may consider for publication: *Journal of the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences* - www.neafcs.org/content.asp?pageID=404, *Journal of Extension* - www.joe.org, *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* - www.aafcs.org, *Forum for Family and Consumer Issues*-www.ncsu.edu/ffci, *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education*-www.natefacs.org/JFCSE/jfcse.htm, *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* - www.sagepub.com/journalProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal201273, and others should be full of research articles on high impact programming and evaluation efforts of Family and Consumer Sciences professionals.

3. Reading the Editor's Page or Submission Guidelines

Read the editor's page in a journal carefully. The editor describes the submission guidelines for that specific journal. If the journal is electronic, look for submission guidelines or an author information button/link on the journal's homepage. The guidelines will identify the types of articles and topics appropriate for the journal (e.g., reviews, essays, opinion pieces, or quantitative studies only, theoretical or applied studies only) and format requirements. Some journals focus on a theme for each issue or annually. This information is included in the submission guidelines. Be sure to read formatting information closely. Follow the directions/instructions as they are very important and can mean the difference between getting published or your article being rejected.

4. Reviewing Human Subjects Guidelines and Procedures

Many universities require faculty to have their research plans reviewed and approved prior to beginning a study and/or submitting findings for publication. Learn about your university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Human Subjects Review policies well in advance of beginning an applied research study that you plan to publish. In order to protect the welfare of human subjects, researchers are ethically—and legally—bound to have research plans reviewed and approved prior to beginning your proposed research. While having to complete this process may seem like an obstacle to getting your project accomplished, there

are several benefits to having your study approved by the Human Subjects Review Board. These include: 1) a better project may result from having professionals with differing areas of expertise providing information and offering useful suggestions; 2) you will know you are treating your participants ethically and responsibly; and 3) you will have the protection of the university behind you. If you follow IRB-approved procedures, the IRB and the university are responsible if anything goes wrong (Weigel, Brown, & Martin, 2004).

Another benefit of having your study reviewed by the Human Subjects Review Board is that you will have to plan each step of your research process from start to finish before you begin. While this may seem unnecessary or even detrimental to your efficiency, it will enhance the likelihood of your completing a thorough, complete, and publishable project. Previous studies have repeatedly documented the fact that having a detailed plan prior to beginning increases the likelihood of achieving a goal, and that fact holds true when writing a publishable article, too. When writing an article about work in Extension, it may not be necessary to get approval from IRB in order to publish. However, following the Human Subjects Guidelines and Procedures of your university will introduce you to the IRB process for future articles/work/ studies.

5. Submitting for Publication Consideration

Academicians and researchers suggest submitting journal articles using a hierarchical approach— start by submitting your article to the top publishing outlet within your professional field. If your article is rejected by the top journal, follow revision recommendations and submit to the next journal in the hierarchy (Bucholtz, 2006).

Once you submit your journal article for publication it may take several months before your article is accepted or published. Usually you will receive feedback with recommended revisions and a timeline for resubmission before final publication. Do not submit an article to more than one journal at the same time. This is considered to be an unethical practice by all scholarly journals (Bucholtz, 2006).

When Do I Write?

It is important to set aside large blocks of time to work on your article—make writing a priority! Also remember the rules of publishing...write, (re) write, (re) write. You will want to polish your article, and then polish it again. After it is as good as you can make it, ask colleagues to read it—and ask them to be critical! Get feedback before submitting for publication.

Prepare Yourself for Criticism

Criticism is part of the process. Without criticism, we would still believe the world is flat! Some reviewers are kinder than others when they offer criticism, but even if you are unlucky enough to be reviewed by a harsh critic, do not take it personally (Bucholtz, 2006). Let the reviewer's comments guide you and your thinking about how to make the article stronger. In addition, you may want to ask your peers who have published journal articles about their experiences—if they are honest, they will tell you stories that will make your hair curl about critical experiences they have had. However, they will probably also tell you that the suggestions they received ultimately improved the final product. Remember, too, that a request to make revisions is a good thing. It means that reviewers liked what you wrote enough to consider publishing your manuscript, and they are working with you to help make it better, which will reflect positively on you as a professional.

Use the Style Manual Designated by Each Specific Journal

A majority of professional journals in the area of Family and Consumer Sciences use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2001), commonly known as APA style. APA has online help available to you at their Web site (<http://apastyle.apa.org/>). Your university library will have a Web page with style help ready for you to access at any time. For example, The Ohio State University Library has downloadable handouts in APA and other styles that anyone can access (library.osu.edu/sites/guides/apagd.php). Other manuscript submission styles may also have online resources available to you. Check with the specific journal to determine if they use a specific style.

Consider Publishing with a Team

If writing a journal article was easy, everyone would do it! But it is not that hard either. One way to make writing and publishing in professional journals easier is to work with colleagues at your own university or from other universities across the nation and make it a team effort. This way, you will have others with whom to share the work load and hold you accountable.

Implications for Extension

Many universities have established tenure processes for state, regional, and county-level extension educators that include publishing in referred journals. Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences professionals are being encouraged to publish research and program impacts to demonstrate scholarly work in order to advance in the career ladder/tenure

track. Identifying and publishing in outlets for Extension Family and Consumer Sciences professionals is important to our profession. Sharing your work with other professionals through journals and other scholarly publications establishes Family and Consumer Sciences professionals as university faculty participating in applied research.

If you are an established Family and Consumer Sciences professional with numerous publications and published journal articles, mentor a new colleague in your university extension organization or a new colleague you have met at a professional conference. Help your colleagues to learn the process and share some ideas to get them started. Enabling our Family and Consumer Sciences colleagues to be successful in sharing research results and program impacts is our responsibility. Show the world the high quality programs that Cooperative Extension creates. We help others improve their lives through practical education and applied research. Publish and let the world know we are having an impact in our communities through our Extension work.

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PROGRAM EXCELLENCE THROUGH RESEARCH AWARD

**Barbara O'Neill (New Jersey),
Jing Xiao (Arizona), John Grable
(Kansas), Ruth Lytton (Virginia)**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension developed four online financial self-assessment quizzes: Financial Fitness Quiz, Identity Theft Risk Assessment Quiz, Investment Risk Tolerance Quiz, and Personal Resiliency Assessment Quiz. The quizzes provide scores and feedback to consumers and collect data for research about financial practices.

**Joan Wages, Sarah Burkett,
Stephanie Diehl, Elena Serrano,
Julie Shelhamer (Virginia)**

Impacts of the childhood overweight prevention program, Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids, were measured by administering pre and post-tests to 319 youth participants. Results showed higher confidence, better attitudes, and improved behaviors related to choosing healthy snacks, drinks and portion sizes, after the program.