Choosing Your Journal Wisely!

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Two Choices Need to be Made for Publication

*You* (the authors) choose where to submit (i.e., which journal)

*They* (the journals) choose what to publish (i.e., which papers)

But, *YOU* actually have some control over both choices!
Picking Where to Submit (Totally Your Choice)

What to consider?

Fit between your paper and the journal’s scope

Reputation of the journal

Customer service of the journal
Fit between Your Paper and the Journal’s Scope

A good fit, means that your paper is more likely to be accepted by the journal.

But, even more importantly, a good fit means that your paper is more likely to be read by the readers in your field (bad fit = wrong subscribers; and most appropriate readers are non-subscribers).

Your goal in publication is to showcase your work: Publications are the coin of the realm (the official currency of your field) that advance your career.
Reputation of the Journal

**IMPACT FACTOR:**
A good strategy is to submit to the journal with the highest impact factor in your field that you think will likely accept your paper in some form or fashion.
Choosing a High Impact Journal Can Be Like Fighting with a Double-edged Sword:
it Cuts Both Ways!

Journals with the highest impact factor have the highest non-review and rejection rates; and frequently require extensive new data

Journals with the highest impact factor have a high “page-pressure” rate: Limitations in number of pages, number of figures, numbers of references

Journals with the highest impact factor are widely read and widely cited--but because of limitations, you may end up presenting bare-bones data and typically a significant amount of your data becomes supplementary

Not enough data is always presented to convince skeptical and sometimes jealous scientists (all scientists are skeptical and focus on flaws)--“I can’t believe that he/she got that published in Science!” E.g., to some, disproving a Science paper can almost be as much fun as publishing a Science paper

In collecting substantial new data for a revision, the novelty of the original information presented in your manuscript may wear off
Mitigating Factors for Choosing a High Impact Journal

Common knowledge/bias in the field of a journal’s quality (not necessarily the same as impact factor)

Ranking in the field (3rd out of 8 journals, in the top third)

Citation half-life

Author’s habit

Author’s previous success or lack thereof with a particular journal
Customer Service of the Journal

How quickly do they review? How quickly do they publish?

How fairly do they review?

How helpful are their reviews?

Are there costs to publish (page and color) or other limitations like number of pages, number of figures, number of references?

Are they open access? If so, when?

Do you like the quality of their product (e.g., figure reproduction)
How Do They Choose What to Publish?

They choose based on fit: is the study of high interest to their readers? Is it of broad interest?

They choose based on the importance of the advance in the field: is the study of high impact?

They choose based on excellence: does the paper address an important question, have state-of-the-art experiments, and provide high-quality data of sufficient quantity; and is the presentation professional (excellent figure quality, concisely and clearly written manuscript)?
How Can You Influence Their Choice?

At Submission

Make it clear that the topic and findings of your paper are of high interest to the journal’s readers and are of broad interest.

Make it clear that you are doing excellent science, choose your points, and write “good”: be clear, concise, compelling, and error free.
Be professional and respectful, but you can challenge (with cogent arguments and facts) comments in reviews and editor decisions when deemed inappropriate

Respond to all criticisms with an appropriate revision or a reasonable explanation as to why a revision was not done

To some degree this is a negotiation process, but the scientific standards of the journal must be met
Don’t Burn Your Bridges!

Editors/reviewers are both gatekeepers and midwives

Both are essentially volunteers, yet typically you get far more than what you pay for!

Peer-review and the editorial process: it’s not always perfect, but it’s the best we got

Never say never, and never best nasty: you don’t want your future work to be evaluated with prejudice--showing respect for the process and the people involved goes a long way toward future success