

To do list when submitting your manuscript

Before writing

Organise your text by asking yourself the basic questions:

- Who will read my manuscript?
- What is the objective I wish to achieve with this document?
- What is the message I wish to convey (= what will the audience remember of what I wrote) ?

Then consult the journal's editorial rules and follow them to the letter: formatting, model, number of pages, placement of logos, versioning, possible rules for distribution and confidentiality, etc. Check whether your journal is a predatory one, e.g. by consulting the directory of open access journals (<https://doaj.org>).

Organise your manuscript

Follow as much as possible the IMRaD structure, which has the advantage of being universally recognised:

- **Title:** is it precise and catchy enough, even for the non-specialist? Emphasise the results rather than the approach.
- **Names of the author(s):** respect the instructions on the cover page, such as the order of the logos, the name of the tutor, etc.
- **Abstract/Summary:** take care of it as it will often be the only part that is read.
- **Table of contents:** only if requested or for a long article.
- **Introduction:** make sure you set out the problem, and state the assumptions explicitly.
- **Methods:** ensure traceability of your work; others must be able to reproduce what you have done.
- **Results:** ensure a logical construction with a common thread. Highlight one or a few salient results and resist the temptation to say everything.
- **Discussion:** "say what you mean, and mean what you say".
- **Conclusion and perspectives:** be critical and highlight the positive AND negative outcomes. Don't dodge the difficulties encountered, but instead propose solutions, or at least avenues. If possible, end the conclusion with a take-away message.
- **Acknowledgements:** Don't forget to mention your funding sources.
- **Bibliography:** Strictly respect the rules of citation. The bibliography says a lot about the care taken in writing the manuscript.

Check the style

- For each sentence, put yourself in the reader's shoes: how will they interpret/understand what you have written?
- Always aim for conciseness, clarity and frankness. Be very explicit in your explanations, and avoid innuendo.
- Alternate passive and active forms.
- Maintain a good balance between the conceptual, factual and emotional registers. A text can be both rigorous and concise, and still be interesting.
- Do not make subjective judgements. On the other hand, you are entitled to state the facts and express your expectations in a factual manner.
- Don't overuse acronyms, and describe them when they first appear.
- Take particular care with the summary and conclusions.
- Do not hesitate to highlight your personal contribution, or the progress of your work in order to show what advances have been made in relation to the state of the art.
- Use the spell checker, then check the spelling again. A text with mistakes will leave a lasting bad impression.
- The choice, quality and formatting of figures says a lot about the quality of the document! Take care with your figures and make sure that everything is done to communicate the desired message. A good figure highlights a single strong message, and avoids spreading yourself too thinly over several aspects.
- Plagiarism: never ever copy texts or results from other authors without quoting them. Otherwise rephrase them with your own words.
- English or French: the writing style is not exactly the same, think about it. Do not mix British English with American English.

Final check list

- Turn line and page numbering on. Line numbering helps a lot in the reviewing process.
- Equations, tables and figures are numbered.
- Each figure is useful and readable. Each figure is named and commented on in the text.
- Each figure has a legend, and correct axes, with units. The size of the fonts in the figures may not be less than 80% that of the text.
- The manuscript includes a conclusion with perspectives.
- All sources are cited with the precision necessary to locate them easily.
- Spelling has been checked.

An article cannot be written in one go. Read and re-read the different parts, if possible several days apart. You will be surprised to discover what you have written.

Before submitting your article, isolate yourself from all distractions, and then read it over quietly and very carefully. Many mistakes can be eliminated this way.

When proofreading, be very critical. For each sentence/picture/table, ask yourself: Is this correct? Does it make sense? Can it be improved? How will the reader perceive it?