Rejected manuscripts: Next steps and finding the right fit

The journey to publication

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About the speakers

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Colloids Journals

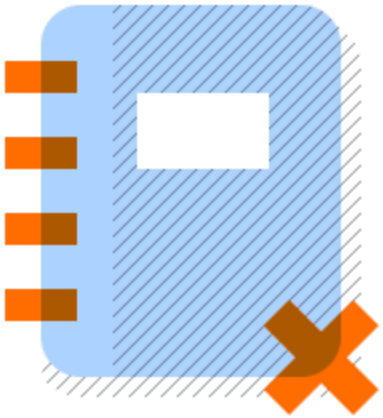
Rejected? You are not alone.

Publication in a respected journal is critical to having your work seen by a wide audience and ensuring you are recognized for your findings.

Millions of researchers encounter rejection during the publication process each year.

Rejection isn't easy, however, it ***can lead to*** bigger and ***better things*** for you and your research, ***if you handle it effectively***.

What to do when your manuscript has been rejected?

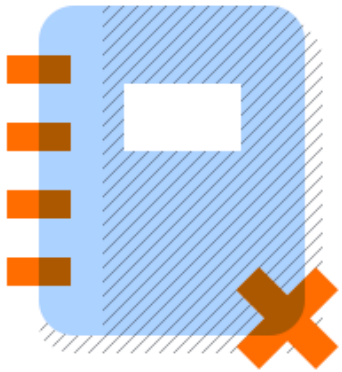


What to do when your manuscript has been rejected?

Rejection is not personal. It is a step on the path to publication.

Each journal is different, with ***different expectations and requirements*** for a publishable manuscript.

Reflect on the feedback from the journal***.*** Your paper has had the benefit of experts giving your work their undivided attention. As such, it's a good idea to pay attention to what they say and consider how you can ***improve your paper***.



Understanding the reasons for rejection

Papers may be rejected ***before (desk reject)*** or ***after (post-review reject)*** peer-review.

Papers rejected ***before external peer review*** have likely been declined for one or multiple reasons:

- Does not align with the ***current interests*** of the journal or its editors ***(aims and scope)***.
- Issues with the ***paper's language or structure***.
- Not in line with the journal's ***Guide for Authors (e.g., formatting)***.
- Lower ***perceived novelty and/or impact*** than expected by the journal.
- Ethical reasons (*e.g.*, textual overlap, duplicate submissions).

Understanding the reasons for rejection

Papers may be rejected ***before (desk reject)*** or ***after (post-review reject)*** peer-review.

Papers rejected ***after external peer review*** are likely to have one or more issues with the content of the paper. ***The decision letter should specify these points for improvement***.

It is important to distinguish between comments on presentation (formatting, language, etc.) and those addressing the science (methodology, error analysis, statistical anomalies, *etc*.).

Comments on science are of high priority to address before submission to a new journal!

Appealing the rejection

Although it can help clarify errors and address concerns from the editors, ***appeals should only be considered if you strongly disagree with the editor or reviewer***.

While appealing is within your right as an author, most appeals are ***not successful*** unless invited.

Journals may welcome resubmission of significantly revised manuscripts ***without appeal***. Check the journals' ***Guide for Authors*** for clarification.

Tip: Your time may be best spent revising (if needed) and submitting to a new journal.

Appealing the rejection

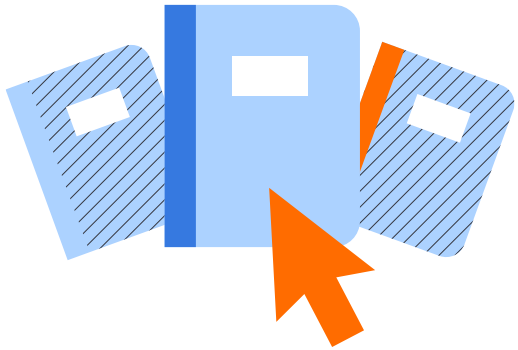
Manuscript improvements alone are not sufficient to appeal a rejection. A ***well-drafted appeal letter*** is key to getting your resubmission accepted.

This letter must:

- ***Clarify points of disagreement*** with the editorial decision.
- ***Respectfully address concerns and comments*** raised in the rejection.
- ***Provide concise responses*** in support of the paper.
- ***Make a strong presentation*** of the strengths of the research.
- Highlight relevant ***new*** data and information.

Tip: Always have a colleague read your rebuttal to ensure your tone remains polite and professional.

Finding the right fit

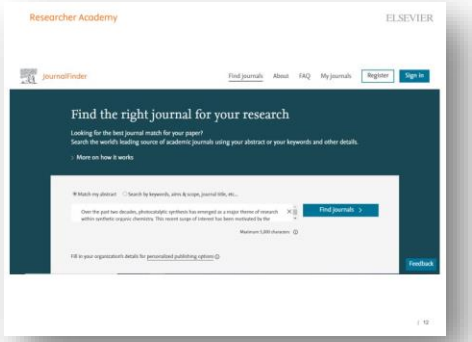


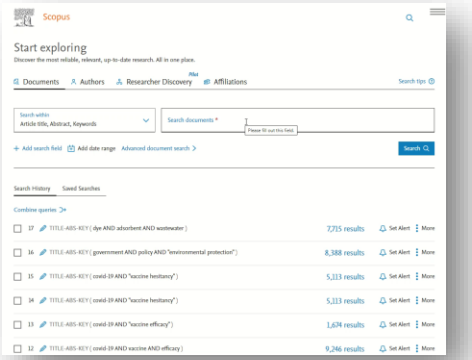
Finding the right fit

You are more likely to be ***successful*** by making the ***necessary improvements*** and ***submitting to another journal***!

Tools and options you have to find a more suitable journal:

- ***Journal Finder*** – AI tool matching title and abstract across a publisher's journals
- ***Scopus*** – Define journals by topic and coverage area. Find if similar work has been published recently in the journal.
- ***References*** – What journals are you citing? Check their aims and scope.
- ***Transfer Offers*** – Provided alongside or shortly after rejection by many journals to match scope, perceived impact, novelty, editorial interest and more.






JournalFinder
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Find the right journal for your research
Looking for the best journal match for your paper?
Search the world's leading source of academic journals using your abstract or your keywords and other details.
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Match my abstract
Search by keywords, aims & scope, journal title, etc...
Over the past two decades, photocatalytic synthesis has emerged as a major theme of research within synthetic organic chemistry. This recent surge of interest has been motivated by the
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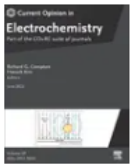

Text match score

CiteScore	Impact Factor	Acceptance rate	Time to 1st decision	Time to publication
12.0	8.5	92%	6 weeks	5 weeks

Publishing options for this journal

Open Access

$3,700

Article Publishing Charge (APC), excluding taxes

Your article will be made publicly available upon publication

Subscription

No publishing charge

Your article can be shared according to this journal's article sharing policy

Feedback

Finding the right fit

You are more likely to be ***successful*** by making the ***necessary improvements*** and ***submitting to another journal***!

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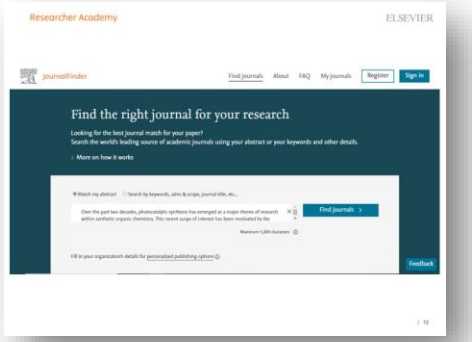
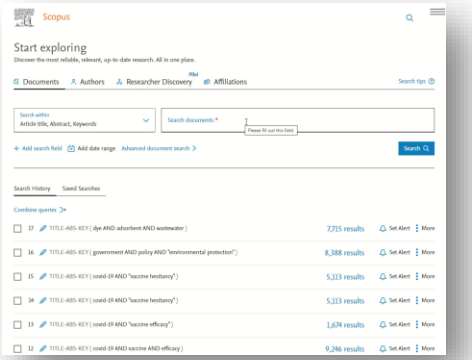


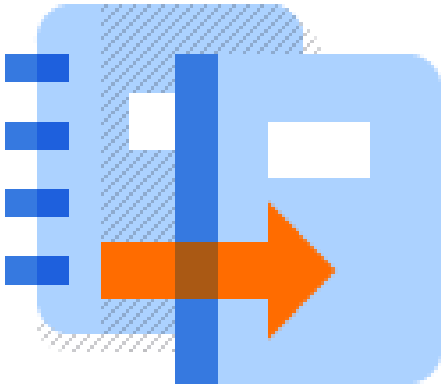


Transferring your paper

Finding the right journal to submit to next is difficult.

That's why publishers offer the option for you to transfer your paper, helping to find the best home for your paper, quickly and easily.

Article Transfer Service (ATS) aims to ***shorten your path to publication***. Expert editorial teams and matching technology work to suggest the right journals for your work, if your initial submission isn't successful.



Transferring your paper

The benefits of accepting an article transfer:

- ***Match*** – Find the best home for your paper. The journal recommendations are determined by evaluating scope, article type, performance and more.

- ***Ease*** – Reduce the effort spent on resubmission. Authors will be guided through the transfer process every step of the way.

- ***Speed*** – Publish your article as quickly as possible. Accepting an offer to transfer your article within the same publishing house reduces time to publication.

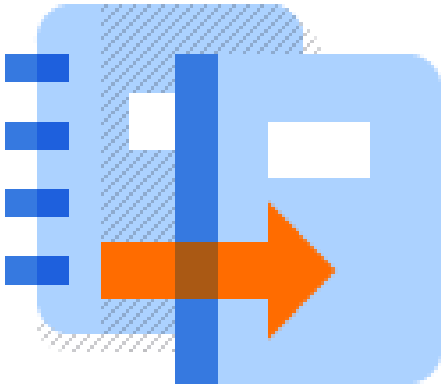
Transferring your paper

Transfer recommendations are powered by one of the following:

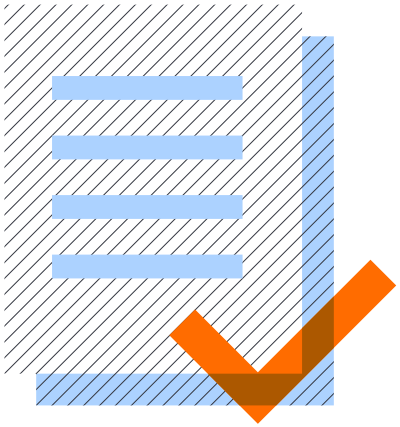
- ***Journal Editors*** – They use their expertise to analyze manuscripts and make transfer recommendations.

- ***Matching algorithms*** – Learning algorithms are developed to assess data on topics, citations, acceptance rates, and more to identify the best home for your paper.

- ***Scientific Managing Editors*** – A global team of dedicated subject-matter experts advise on article improvements and provide personalized guidance.



How to improve your chance of acceptance next time?



Effectively responding to reviewers' comments

- Try not to take reviews personally; they are ***constructive feedback*** from experts to help you improve your manuscript.
- After receiving reviews, take a day or two to relax and digest the comments. Then read the reviews again ***divide the comments into superficial and critical***.
- ***Take your time.*** You may need to consider conducting more experiments, expanding your sample size, carrying out statistical analyses, performing major text revisions.
- Once you have carried out your revisions, it is time to prepare your response to the reviewer comments.

Tip: Complete the minor corrections first for a quick win before you tackle the more challenging comments.

Effectively responding to reviewers' comments

- Start by thanking the Editor and Reviewers. However, it is not necessary to do this for every point raised.

- ***Reply point-by-point***:
  - Make concessions and repairs: *"The reviewer makes a good point…"*
  - Argue politely when you disagree: *"The reviewer may have overlooked..."*
  - Clearly indicate how the concern has been addressed and where: *"To address this point, additional data has been added to the main manuscript on page 4 in Table 3."*
  - Include modified figures and text directly in the response letter.
  - Provide ***valid reasoning with evidence*** to support your arguments (*e.g.*, additional data, references).

- ***Respond to all comments*** and ***stick to the science***. We recommend consulting colleagues to ensure your responses are clear and polite before returning your revised submission.

Getting support to improve language

What if the reason for rejection is language-related?

Language editing services offered by publishers ***provide a detailed language check***, including spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and terminology by a language expert and a field expert.

Professional writing services can facilitate a clean and clear manuscript without grammatical errors.

Translation services with native language (target language of the journal) editors may play a role in improving the quality and readability of your paper.

If your paper is rejected…

It is okay to be upset
Take some time to let the emotions flow and then focus on constructive comments

Critiques are a good thing
Even in rejection, expert comments can help you improve your paper and reach a receptive audience

Read and consider
Read and consider the reasons for rejection and comments from the journal

Search and choose
Carefully think about where to try next and what your priorities are (*e.g.*, impact, speed, etc.) when determining the right destination journal

Don't lose hope, you'll get there!

Remember, your research matters!

Every publication journey is unique. And few are easy. You are not alone. Every author confronts rejection in their career.

Rejection makes us and our research stronger. Effective researchers use rejection to enable better publications in more suitable journals for your research!

Keep the faith. Appeals and resubmissions may fail; do not lose hope. Most manuscripts are published only after facing a few rounds of rejection.

Resources

- Scopus
- Journal Finder
- Article Transfer Service
- Researcher Academy modules:
  - How to respond to reviewers' comments
  - How do editors look at your paper?
- Appendices: Examples for effectively responding to reviewers' comments

Thank you.

We are happy to answer any questions!

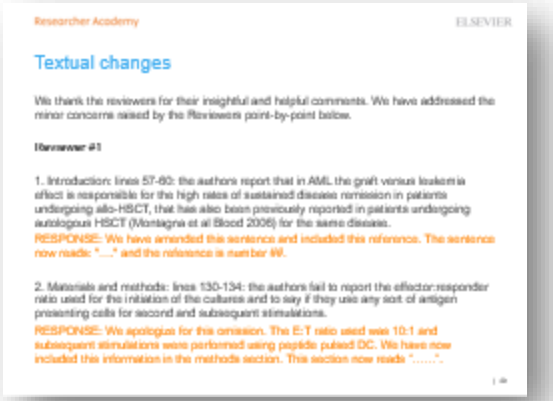
Wesley Swords
Jessica Tom

Connect with us on LinkedIn!

Appendices: Examples for effectively responding to reviewers' comments

Effectively responding to reviewers' comments

Examples – Our recommendations from the editor and reviewer perspective:



Textual changes **Figure design** **Polite rebuttal**

Textual changes

We thank the reviewers for their insightful and helpful comments. We have addressed the minor concerns raised by the Reviewers point-by-point below.

Reviewer #1

1. Introduction: lines 57-60: the authors report that in AML the graft versus leukemia effect is responsible for the high rates of sustained disease remission in patients undergoing allo-HSCT, that has also been previously reported in patients undergoing autologous HSCT (Montagna et al Blood 2006) for the same disease.

RESPONSE: We have amended this sentence and included this reference. The sentence now reads: "…." and the reference is number ##.

2. Materials and methods: lines 130-134: the authors fail to report the effector:responder ratio used for the initiation of the cultures and to say if they use any sort of antigen presenting cells for second and subsequent stimulations.

RESPONSE: We apologize for this omission. The E:T ratio used was 10:1 and subsequent stimulations were performed using peptide pulsed DC. We have now included this information in the methods section. This section now reads "……".

Figure design

Reviewer #2

1. Figure 3 is low resolution, and the axis labels are hard to read. The authors should also detail the legend abbreviations in the figure caption.

RESPONSE: We have revised Figure 3 to be more legible and clarified the descriptions of the legend within the figure caption.

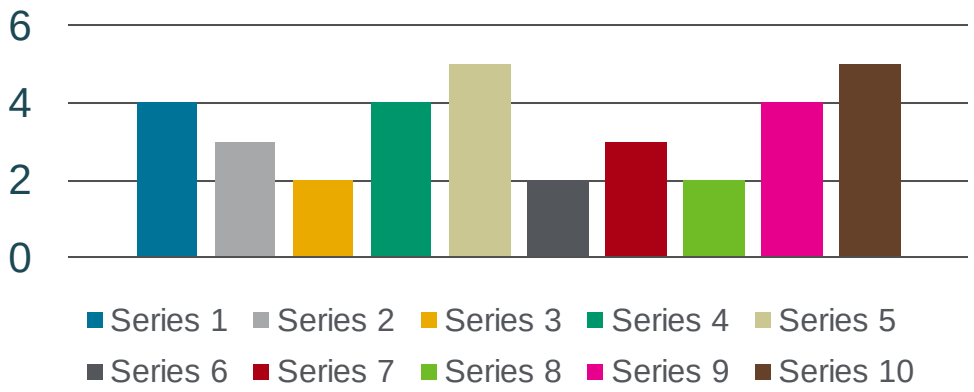


Figure 3. Description of figure……..

Polite rebuttal

Reviewer #2:

2. This is the third observation of the anti-relapse effect of CMV reactivation. Not worthy of a whole paper, just a letter to the editor, particularly given the patient heterogeneity critiqued below.

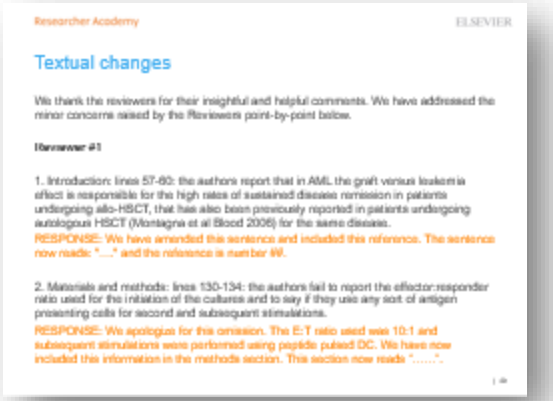
RESPONSE: We think our paper is important because it does not recapitulate previous studies: The disease studied by Elmaagacli was AML. Ours is the first study concerning CML.

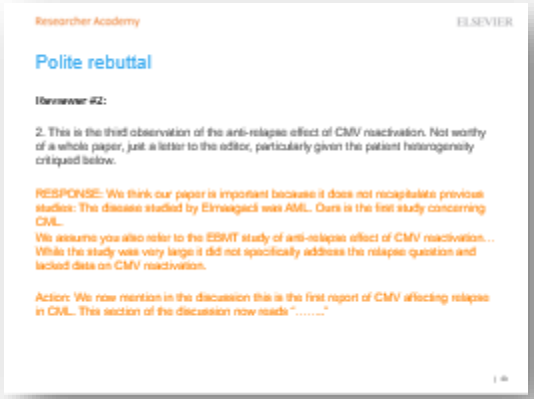
We assume you also refer to the EBMT study of anti-relapse effect of CMV reactivation… While the study was very large it did not specifically address the relapse question and lacked data on CMV reactivation.

Action: We now mention in the discussion this is the first report of CMV affecting relapse in CML. This section of the discussion now reads "……."

Effectively responding to reviewers' comments

Examples – Our recommendations from the editor and reviewer perspective:





Textual changes **Figure design** **Polite rebuttal**

Once completed, send in 1) a new cover letter including the point-by-point response to reviewers, 2) a clean copy of your revised paper, and 3) a highlighted or track-changed version of the paper.