

THINK.CHECK.SUBMIT.

Journals Checklist

THINK: Are You Submitting to a Trusted Journal?

More research is being published worldwide, and new journals and publishers are constantly appearing. Many researchers have concerns about predatory publishing, and it can be challenging to find up-to-date guidance on where to publish.

Always consider whether the journal to which you are submitting is trustworthy. The checklist below highlights some of the red flags to look out for.

CHECK: The Official Think. Check. Submit. Categories

The seven categories and their official sub-questions below are reproduced from the current [Think. Check. Submit. journals checklist](#). Red flags and verification tips are added by the Library to help you answer each one.

A note on relatively new journals: this checklist assumes that a journal has an established track record, such as past issues, indexing or citation metrics. A genuinely legitimate but relatively new journal may not yet meet some of these criteria simply because it has not existed long enough. A newly established journal that demonstrates transparency through clearly identified editors, well-defined peer-review procedures, and transparent publication fees should be viewed differently from a long-standing journal that remains unable to provide clear information on these aspects.

1. Do you or your colleagues know the journal?

Official checklist questions

- Have you read any articles in the journal before?
- Is it easy to discover the latest papers in the journal?
- Name of the journal: is it unique and not easily confused with another journal?
- Can you cross-check it against the ISSN Portal?

Red flags

- A title that closely resembles that of a well-known journal, with a word or two changed.
- No one in your network is familiar with the journal, and it rarely, if ever, appears in the literature you normally read or cite.

How to check

- Check the [ISSN Portal](#) to confirm that the ISSN matches the exact title and publisher.
- Search the title in [Crossref](#) and see whether past articles are registered there.

2. Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?

Official checklist questions

- Is the publisher's name clearly displayed on the journal website?
- Can you contact the publisher by telephone, email, and post?

Red flags

- No "About us" page or physical address; contact limited to a web form.
- Uses a free email address (e.g. Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc), rather than an address linked to the journal, publisher or institution.

How to check

- Look for a named publisher, a genuine postal address, and an email address linked to the journal or publisher.
- Try the contact details: a working phone number or a real reply is a good sign.

3. Is the journal clear about the peer review process?

Official checklist questions

- Does the site say whether reviewers are independent/external, and how many review each paper?
- Is review done by an expert editorial board or by researchers in your subject area?
- The journal does not guarantee acceptance or an unrealistically short review time.

Red flags

- Promises peer review and publication within a matter of days.
- Has no named editor-in-chief or editorial board, or lists board members who cannot be verified.
- Shows little or no evidence that submitted papers are ever rejected.

How to check

- Search two or three named editorial board members on Google Scholar or their institutional profile. Do they list the journal on their profile?
- Read a few sample published articles. Do they appear to be properly edited and peer reviewed?

4. Are articles indexed and/or archived in dedicated services?

Official checklist questions

- Will your work be indexed or archived in an easily discoverable database?
- Does the publisher ensure long-term archiving and preservation of digital publications?
- Does the publisher use persistent digital identifiers (e.g. DOIs)?

Red flags

- Claims of Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, or DOAJ indexing that you cannot confirm yourself.
- Has no DOIs, or lists DOIs that do not link anywhere or links to unrelated content.

How to check

- Check the journal directly in [DOAJ](#) or the [NLM Catalog](#) for health sciences.
- Search the journal in [Crossref](#) to confirm the journal's DOIs are actually registered.
- Check whether the journal or its articles appear in your library's own subscription databases.

5. Is it clear what fees will be charged?

Official checklist questions

- Does the site explain what the fees are for and when they are charged?
- Does the publisher explain how it is financially supported?
- Is the currency and amount of any fees stated?
- Does the site explain whether waivers are available?

Red flags

- Fees undisclosed, unclear, or revealed only after acceptance.
- Fees seem unusually low or high without explanation, or additional charges appear later in the publication process.

How to check

- Look for a dedicated "Fees" or "APC" (Article-Processing Charge) page that clearly states the amount, currency, and any waiver policy before you submit.

- For a rough sense of scale: legitimate APCs commonly fall somewhere between €1000 and €3500, with prestige or highly selective journals sometimes charging more. This varies a lot by field and publisher, so treat it as a general sense of scale rather than a rule. The real indication is still whether the fee is disclosed and explained, not the amount itself.

6. Are guidelines provided for authors on the publisher website?

Official checklist questions

- For Open Access journals, is there a clear licence policy (e.g. Creative Commons), applied consistently?
- Does the publisher let you retain copyright, and can you share your work via a repository?
- Is there a clear conflict-of-interest policy for authors, editors, and reviewers?
- Can you tell what formats your paper will be available in (HTML, XML, PDF)?
- Does the journal provide information about usage or citation metrics?

Red flags

- Has no clear retraction policy or information on copyright or licensing.
- Author instructions are missing, vague, or inconsistent with the journal's published content.

How to check

- Read the "Instructions for Authors" page carefully before submitting. Reputable journals should provide clear and detailed guidance for authors.

7. Is the publisher a current member of a recognised industry initiative?

Official checklist questions

- Are they a current member of [COPE](#) and do they follow its guidelines?
- If Open Access, is the journal listed in [DOAJ](#)?
- If the publisher offers Open Access publishing, is it a current member of [OASPA](#)?
- Is the journal hosted on any listing from [INASP Journals Online platform](#)?
- If Open Access, is it hosted on [SciELO](#), indexed in [Latindex](#), or indexed by [Redalyc](#) (for Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal)?
- Is the publisher a member of another trade association (e.g. [STM Association](#))?

Red flags

- The journal claims membership of, or affiliation with, an organisation that cannot be verified on the organisation's official website.

How to check

- Check membership directly on [COPE](#), [OASPA](#), [STM Association](#) and [DOAJ](#).
- Some countries maintain their own national quality-assurance registers for journals.

SUBMIT: Only If You Can Answer 'Yes' to questions above

Complete the checklist and submit your manuscript only if you can answer 'yes' to most or all of the questions above. If several categories come back unclear or 'no', do not submit, that uncertainty is itself the answer.

Also check [Beall's List \(archived\)](#) and [predatoryjournals.org](#) as extra, non-official starting points, and use the [Retraction Watch Hijacked Journal Checker](#) if a familiar journal's site looks different from what you recall.