

DESK REJECTION IN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING: A QUICK GUIDE



Desk rejection occurs frequently in academic publishing, whereby a manuscript is **rejected by a journal editor without any peer review process**. This decision is usually made within a short period after submission, likely within days or weeks of its submission. Academics must understand desk rejection as it relates to publishing their work. This guide will outline the issues behind desk rejection, the implications, and how to reduce the chance of desk rejection.

What is Desk Rejection?

Desk rejection means that the journal editor is rejecting your manuscript directly and not sending it on to the peer reviewers. [\[1\]](#)

The reasons for the rejection are as follows:



Scope Misalignment



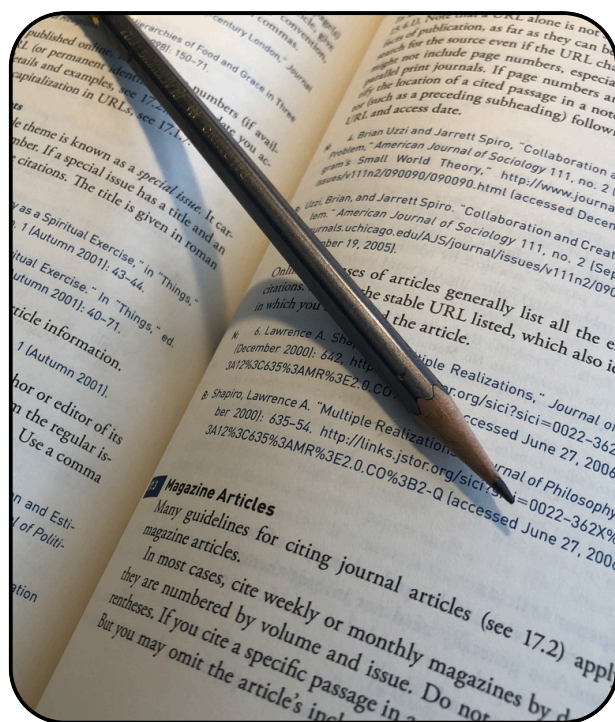
Formatting Issues



Specific Quality Issues



Specific Language or Presentation Problems.



Why Does Desk Rejection Happen?

Multiple reasons cause desk rejection; understanding these can help authors avoid common pitfalls

OUT OF SCOPE MANUSCRIPT

The manuscript does not fit well with the aims of the journal.

POOR MANUSCRIPT QUALITY

Not using a clear rationale, no clear hypothesis, or using a valid methodology.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES

Ignoring submission guidelines, plagiarism, and ethics policies.

LACK OF NOVELTY

Offers no new contribution or simply replicates existing studies.

MISSING COMPONENTS

Files like a cover letter, figures, or ethical approval may be omitted.

LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR ISSUES

Unclear writing or grammatical errors make it hard to evaluate.

HIGH REJECTION STANDARDS

The higher the impact factor journal, the more likely you are destined for rejection.



Impact on Researchers

- **Saves Time:** Authors do not spend months in the peer review process for an ill-fit journal.
- **Encourages Improvement:** Feedback, if provided, can help improve revisions.
- **Improves Journal Targeting:** In the future, it will aid in refining submission strategy.

Interesting Pointers on Desk Rejection

- **70-80%** of submissions to high-quality journals are desk rejected. [2]
- Decisions are normally made within **7-14 days**. [3]
- Editors function as **gatekeepers to ensure submissions** fall within the journal's standards.
- Some journals do have desks that allow **pre-submission inquiries**.
- Desk rejections are not **indicative of poor research**; rather, they are likely indicative of a poor fit or presentation. [4]
- It is typical to be **desk-rejected multiple times** before being accepted in another place.



How to Avoid Desk Rejection: Best Practices

✓ Choose the Right Journal

Make sure to check journal aims and scope, and review prior published work to gain more of an understanding of fit. [\[4\]](#)

✓ Follow Submission Guidelines Meticulously

Make sure to follow the journal's formatting requirements, word limits, and document requirements.

✓ Ensure Manuscript Quality

Ensure your research question is clear, methodological rigor is sound, and data is analysed appropriately. Don't embellish the results. [\[4\]](#)

✓ Improve Language and Presentation

Make use of professional editing services or feedback from colleagues to ensure that you are clear and correct.

✓ Highlight Novelty and Relevance

Emphasize how your study contributes new knowledge or addresses gaps in the field.

✓ Use Pre-Submission Inquiries

If pre-submission inquiries are available and appropriate, use them to check that your paper is appropriate

✓ Prepare a Strong Cover Letter

If you can demonstrate the importance and appropriateness of your work for a journal, you will pique the editorial interest.

What To Do After Desk Rejection?

✓ Review the Editor's Comments

Make use of them to rework or recast the manuscript.

✓ Revise and Improve

Make improvements on clarity, organization, and method.

✓ Select Another Journal

Choose a different journal that may have a better topic fit or audience fit.

✓ Seek Peer Suggestions

Ask your mentors or peers what feedback they might have and suggestions for next steps.

Conclusion

Desk rejection is a typical part of scholarly publishing. It is a moment to reflect on improving a manuscript, re-considering which journal to submit to, and developing a better understanding of the editorial process and its expectations. Using some strategies systematically and carefully can help researchers review those rejections for eventual success.

