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'Eight reasons I rejected your article'

A journal editor reveals the top reasons so many manuscripts don't make it to the peer review process

By Peter Thrower, PhD Posted on 12 September 2012

  (<http://www.printfriendly.com>)

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The Author

When a manuscript is submitted to a high-quality scholarly journal, it goes through intense scrutiny — even before it's seen by the editor-in-chief and selected for peer review. At Elsevier, between 30 percent to 50 percent of articles don't even make it to the peer review process.

As Editor-in-Chief of *Carbon* (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/carbon/>), the international journal of the American Carbon Society, Dr. [Peter Thrower](http://www.matse.psu.edu/faculty_acd/emeritus/thrower) (http://www.matse.psu.edu/faculty_acd/emeritus/thrower) experiences this situation first-hand. His advice to authors: "By avoiding these pitfalls, you will save reviewers, editors and staff time and frustration, and ensure that your work is judged by its scientific merit, not mistakes."



1. It fails the technical screening.

Before they even go to the editor-in-chief, articles are checked for technical elements. The main reasons they are rejected are:

Peter Thrower, PhD, is Editor-in-Chief of *Carbon*, the international journal of the American Carbon Society, and Professor Emeritus of Material Sciences and Engineering at Penn State University.

- The article contains elements that are suspected to be plagiarized, or it is currently under review at another journal. (Republishing articles or parts of articles, submitting to one or more journals at the same time or using text or images without permission is not allowed. See our ethical guidelines.)
- The manuscript is not complete; it may be lacking key elements such as the title, authors, affiliations, keywords, main text, references and all tables and figures).
- The English is not sufficient for the peer review process,
- The figures are not complete or are not clear enough to read.
- The article does not conform to the Guide for Authors for the journal it is submitted to.
- References are incomplete or very old.

2. It does not fall within the Aims and Scope.

- For the journal *Carbon*, the material studied may contain carbon, but is not carbon.
- The study uses a carbon material but the focus is on something different.
- There is no new carbon science.

3. It's incomplete.

- The article contains observations but is not a full study.
- It discusses findings in relation to some of the work in the field but ignores other important work.

4. The procedures and/or analysis of the data is seen to be defective.

- The study lacked clear control groups or other comparison metrics.
- The study did not conform to recognized procedures or methodology that can be repeated.
- The analysis is not statistically valid or does not follow the norms of the field.

5. The conclusions cannot be justified on the basis of the rest of the paper.

- The arguments are illogical, unstructured or invalid.
- The data does not support the conclusions.
- The conclusions ignore large portions of the literature.

6. It's simply a small extension of a different paper, often from the same authors.

- Findings are incremental and do not advance the field.
- The work is clearly part of a larger study, chopped up to make as many articles as possible.

7. It's incomprehensible.

- The language, structure, or figures are so poor that the merit can't be assessed. Have a native English speaker read the paper. Even if you ARE a native English speaker. Need help? We offer [language services](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/authorservices) (<http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/authorservices>).

8. It's boring.

- It is archival, incremental or of marginal interest to the field (see point 6).
- The question behind the work is not of interest in the field.
- The work is not of interest to the readers of the specific journals.

For more advice, check out the step-by-step guide *How to Publish in an Elsevier Journal* (http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/landing_main) or the Publishing Connect [Author Training Webcasts](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/trainingwebcasts) (<http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/trainingwebcasts>).



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**marendra nodi** · 5 months ago

to be honest elsevier reviewer standards have been declining for the past few years. They are now at a point where manuscripts are rejected for absolutely non-existent reasons. Look into your review process and improve yourself.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

**Sylvester** → marendra nodi · 21 days ago

marendra modi... from India?

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

**Om Ferga** · a month ago

Totally agree, the future is in Open source publishing.... Generally, I am generally excited to receive good review and enhance my manuscript based on it. That is not the case with the Elsevier standards.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

**Silvia** · 23 days ago

I was taught we don't refer to the paper as "work", but paper, research or study. Pls, can you explain that? Thank you!!

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

**Ruchi** · 13 days ago

The ninth reason is that if the manuscript comes from a developing country like India or China, it is immediately rejected without any scientific rationale. The editors are highly biased for certain group and countries.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

**pokhriyal** → Ruchi · 11 days ago

absolutely, just recently my article in IEEE transaction of computer was rejected..in the first review, they asked me to revise the paper, and then simply rejectedcan't understand whether they have read the revised version, wasted more than 2 years in the process. Strangely, in the first review, only 1 out 4 reviewers had rejected the paper...I need another research to find the reason!

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share >

9 Archived Comments

[Blog Media](http://http://blog-media.net) (http://http://blog-media.net)

September 25, 2012 at 7:21 pm

I will abide by #8. :) This is a good list, as I use a number of writers. For plagiarism please take a look at copscape.com

[Reply](#)

Dr. Aqeel-ur-Rehman

October 16, 2012 at 9:42 am

Good guidance for novice researchers/authors

[Reply](#)

[Alison Bert](http://http://elsevierconnect.com/welcome-to-elsevier-connect/) (http://http://elsevierconnect.com/welcome-to-elsevier-connect/)

October 16, 2012 at 4:45 pm

Thank you both for your comments. I will pass them on to Professor Thrower.

[Reply](#)

Shaukat Wasi

October 18, 2012 at 4:53 am

Hmmmm.... Good points...But.. How to identify that "My work is of interest to the readers of the specific journals"?

[Reply](#)

SC

October 18, 2012 at 4:57 am

The above may be correct for some good journals etc. Why not the papers for review are send to the reviewers without names, institution, country etc...then see the result!!!

[Reply](#)

Linda Willems

October 18, 2012 at 4:51 pm

Thank you very much for your comment. I just wanted to let you can find some useful tips for http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/landing_main?tab=1 (finding journals and http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/landing_main?tab=3 (submitting papers on our Elsevier.com author pages.

[Reply](#)

[Maria](http://http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003407239795) (<http://http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003407239795>)

December 31, 2012 at 5:50 am

Now this is interesting. In rssopnee to my declining to participate in the peer review of a non-OA journal, I get this note, refusing even to admit the reason I gave:Dear Dr. Zane Selvans,You were recently invited to review the above manuscript, but we have not yet received your reply. Because of production and time restrictions, we must now proceed with evaluating this manuscript without your input.Thank you for your past efforts on behalf of the journal. I hope that we may have the privilege of using your services in the future when the timing is more convenient.Yours sincerely,Oded AharonsonEditorIcarusMaybe there really is no reform in this world without collapse.

[Reply](#)

S. Chakraverty

December 23, 2012 at 6:06 am

Theoretically all are great and correct but practically those are not being followed by 95% of the journals..this is my experiance ..why not all journals should be blind review (without, name, country etc..) Just try for one year at least!!

[Reply](#)

Abraham Goodhead

January 19, 2013 at 9:40 pm

Nice to know these little but important secrets

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