



## ***Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)***

**Wendy Laura Belcher**

Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing, 2019.

ISBN: 978-0226499918

442 pp.

Kindle £41 / €47 / \$57

Paperback £43 / €49 / \$60

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Writing-Journal-Twelve-Weeks-Second-ebook/dp/B07SRXDYDW/ref=tmm\\_kin\\_swatc\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Writing-Journal-Twelve-Weeks-Second-ebook/dp/B07SRXDYDW/ref=tmm_kin_swatc_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

### **Review by Amanda J. Haste**

Wendy Belcher is a seasoned academic and writing coach who set herself the task of writing a step-by-step to getting published in academic journals. In fact, as she says in her introduction, “the goals are active and pragmatic” and will also aid you in revising a classroom essay, conference paper, [...] dissertation chapter [or] talk.” (1).

In order to guide the reader through the process of preparing an academic draft for publication *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks* is divided into twelve chapters, each one giving a set of daily tasks. For instance, Week 1: Designing Your Plan for Writing begins by tackling the emotional impact of writing, with ‘Understanding feelings about writing’ and contains boxes for the writer to complete with their thoughts on the positive aspects of writing. The rest of the week covers Day 1, reading the workbook; Day 2, designing your writing schedule; Day 3, selecting a paper for revision; Day 4, rereading your paper to identify revision tasks; and Day 5, setting up your

writing site, citation software, and file backup system; addressing co-authorship; and reading a journal article (14-59).

Subsequent weeks focus on different tasks such as advancing your argument, writing the abstract, selecting a suitable journal, refining your works cited, crafting your claims for significance, analyzing and presenting your evidence, and opening and concluding your article.

Each chapter contains useful flowcharts and checklists which require the reader to engage in a realistic assessment of their own situation, such as the time available for writing, or introducing information such as the criteria to consider when choosing a journal. All these are incredibly detailed: the Belcher Journal Evaluation Form’ (136) allows the reader to tick boxes on twenty-five different criteria, from the preferred category through longevity, punctuality, fees, audience, word limits to citation style and type of submission process. Each one of these twenty-five



criteria is supported by a paragraph explaining their significance (135, 137-141) so the reader can evaluate their own priorities.

Week 11 focuses on the importance of “microrevising” using the Belcher Editing Diagnostic Test whose principles are to hone the prose by reducing lists, strengthening verbs, clarifying pronouns, decreasing prepositions, and cutting unnecessary words (310-323).

In Week 12 we reach the hallowed stage of “Sending your Article” with Day 5 reserved for celebrating! But of course this is only the beginning of the submission process, so Week X covers “Revising and Resubmitting Your Article. Importantly this acknowledges the necessity of “emotionally managing the journal’s decision” (361-4) regarding the carefully crafted work of art that is our submitted article, and starts with the excellent advice to “save the email for when you have time to emotionally absorb its contents on your own” and to “wait to read the reviewers’ comments until you have some real time [...] Even positive decisions usually arrive with critical comments, so it’s better to wait until you have the emotional space to cope” (361).

Belcher cites one author’s description of the emotional journey from despair to acceptance with which virtually all academic authors are only too familiar:

The rejection of my own manuscripts has a sordid aftermath: (a) one day of depression; (b) one day of utter contempt for the editor and his accomplices; (c) one day of decrying the conspiracy against letting Truth be published; (d) one day of fretful ideas about changing my profession; (e) one day of re-evaluating the manuscript in view of the editors’ comments followed by the conclusion that I was lucky it wasn’t accepted!”<sup>1</sup> (362)

Belcher then breaks down all the possible decisions and attitudes of reviewers and editors, including “the reviewers are negative and rude”, “the reviewers’ reports are problematic and/or biased” and “the reviewers give conflicting advice” 362-4) and advises

on the best way to respond in each case. Again, the advice is utterly practical, and she even includes examples of revision cover letters. The final section of this chapter mentions “reviewing someone else’s article”. As Belcher says, citing Didham, Leather and Basset, 2017, “Researchers are becoming increasingly vociferous about turnaround times and the robustness of the peer review system for their own papers, while at the same time abrogating their reviewer responsibilities in droves”<sup>2</sup> (389).

Having tackled every stage of revising an existing article into an *oeuvre* fit for publication, Belcher adds a final chapter, Week 0, in which she tackles the concept of writing an article “from scratch without an idea” and revising it using the workbook *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*.

For this reviewer, speaking as an editor and peer reviewer, I would be delighted if every article I were presented with had been through the Belcher process. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks* really does address every single aspect of preparing a manuscript for publication that you could possibly wish for. At 28x21.5cm/11x8.5” and weighing in at 1k/2.5lb the hard copy is definitely one for your bookshelves rather than your pocket, but in terms of providing the structure, task schedule and deadlines to get your article into publishable form it is ideal. No stone is left unturned, the style is accessible and the attention to detail will help dispel anxiety and build confidence. Highly recommended.

**Dr. Amanda J. Haste (Ph.D. Musicology, Bristol University, UK)** teaches as adjunct faculty in the Music Department of Aix-Marseille University, France and specializes in identity construction through music and language, and on musician identity. She co-edited *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization* (2015). *Ex Modio*, 2015) and she is currently working on a monograph on music and identity which expands on her doctoral research.

<sup>1</sup> Benton J. Underwood (1957) *Psychological Research*. East Norwalk, CT : Appleton-Century-Crofts, p.87.

<sup>2</sup> Raphael K. Didham, Simon R. Leather, and Yves Basset (2017) “Don’t Be a Zero-Sum Reviewer.” *Insect Conservation and Diversity* 10 (1): 1-4, p.1.