

How to Turn Your Thesis into an Article

Tips for Converting Your Terminal Degree
for Journal Publication

Converting your terminal document into a journal article does not have to be a stressful experience



Different audience, different standards

Dissertation committees assess whether a student's work has fulfilled program outcomes and requirements, not whether it's ready for publication or even widespread release. Dissertation review certifies the student's capabilities within the context of the discipline and the institution. (Hawkins AR, et al, The Journal of Academic Librarianship)

Editors and reviewers of peer-reviewed journals are experts in their fields and well versed in scholarly communication. Their task is to assess whether papers and projects further the knowledge in those fields and thus should be published.

Differences between thesis and article

Thesis

- Meets academic requirements
- Reviewed by select committee members
- Chapters
- Lengthy, no word limits
- Table of contents
- Lengthy research of literature
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval described in detail
- Description and copies of tools used
- All findings presented

Article

- Meets journalistic standards
- Reviewed by panel of blind reviewers
- Sections
- Word limits
- Manuscript format
- Succinct research of literature
- IRB described in 1 to 3 sentences
- Essential and succinct tool information
- Selected findings presented

Tip 1: Identify the appropriate target journal

- Read the aims and scope of the journal
- Most journals' websites provide information about the recommended structure and reference style for articles
 - Typical structure:
 - Title page
 - Abstract
 - Keywords
 - Main text introduction
 - Materials and methods
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Acknowledgments
 - Declaration of interest statement
 - References
 - Appendices
 - Table(s) and figure(s)

Standardized journal guides for specific types of papers

- Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
PRISMA guidelines
- Case Studies
CARE guidelines
- Randomized Controlled Trials
CONSORT guidelines
- Quality Improvement Projects
SQUIRE guidelines

<http://www.equator-network.org>

Check the target journal's information for authors to see if any of these guidelines are required.

Tip 2: Shorten length of thesis

- Journal articles are much shorter than theses/dissertations/capstones
 - Require tighter framework and more compact style
 - It is not a matter of copying and pasting
 - Treat your thesis as a separate work
 - Paraphrase and express the same ideas in a different way
 - Select and repurpose
 - Highlight the key points you want the readers to understand

Tip 3: Reformat the introduction as an abstract

- Abstracts in journal articles are typically shorter (100-250 words)
- Some journals require structured abstracts, others do not

Before

Mistrust in healthcare is associated with lower use of healthcare services and lower adherence to treatment among patients who are African Americans. Past experiences of discrimination may help explain why African Americans may mistrust healthcare and healthcare providers. However, some African Americans may be more vulnerable to perceptions of discrimination than others. Research is needed to understand the predictors of healthcare related mistrust among African Americans. Perceived discrimination may be more strongly related to mistrust toward healthcare and providers for African Americans who identify strongly with their own racial group (racial centrality) and feel that others viewed their group negatively (unfavorable public regard). The proposed study sought to address this issue. Upon conducting a primary cross-sectional, survey data collection with local African American community members (N=210), I tested the moderated effect of racial identity (i.e., racial centrality and public regard) on perceived discrimination and mistrust (i.e., medical mistrust and physician mistrust). Perceived discrimination was also positively associated with medical mistrust and physician mistrust. While racial centrality and unfavorable public regard were not significant moderators, they were positively associated with medical mistrust. Results suggest that effects of racial identity may be context-specific in healthcare. Racial identity may be salient during general healthcare experiences, but may not play a significant role in the doctor's office. Further, perceived racial discrimination in healthcare may influence an individual's self-concept of race, which may lead them to mistrust the overall healthcare system. Psychosocial interventions aimed at reducing discrimination-related stress might help to reduce the negative health consequences of

After

Racial centrality may be linked to mistrust in healthcare institutions for African Americans

Adolfo G Cuevas^{1,2} and Kerth O'Brien¹

Abstract
Evidence suggests that racial identity is an important component to African Americans' self-concepts and therefore may be relevant to patients' trust in healthcare, yet little is known as to how racial identity may influence trust or mistrust. African American adults (N=220) in the greater Portland, Oregon, area provided survey reports of healthcare-related attitudes and experiences. Those who reported higher racial centrality had lower trust in healthcare institutions. Based on these findings, clinicians employing patient-centered care approaches should recognize racial identity as an important component to patients' experiences when they seek to deliver equitable care to African American patients.

Keywords
African American, healthcare disparities, medical mistrust, patient-centered care, patient-provider relationship, perceived discrimination, physician mistrust, racial identity

Journal of Health Psychology
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1359105317715092
journals.sagepub.com/home/hpq

Tip 4: Modify the introduction

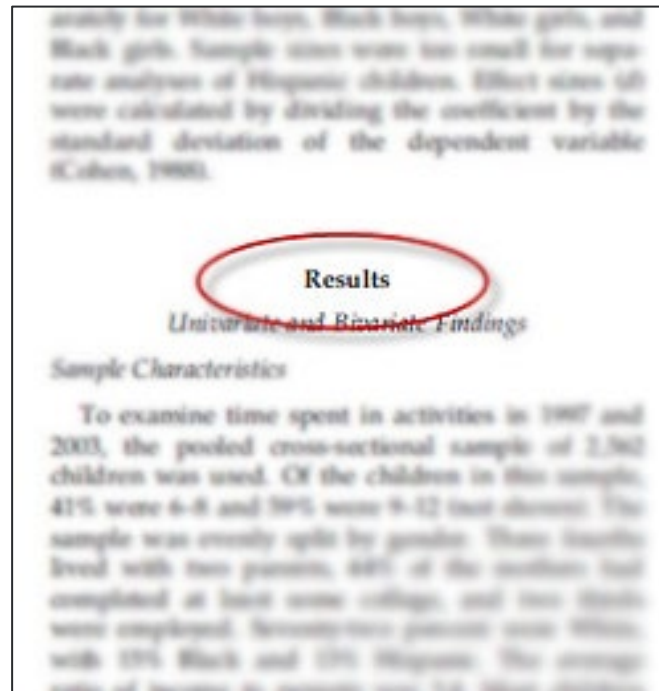
- Be concise!
 - Unless otherwise suggested, keep the introduction short and straight to the point.
 - Use previously published papers (at least three) from the target journal as templates
 - Your thesis may have more than one research question or hypothesis
 - Combine research questions or focus on one from the article

Tip 5: Tighten the methods section

- No extensive discussion needed about your research approach
- Keep the method section succinct
- Use previously published papers (at least three) from the target journal as templates
 - Formatting may differ
 - Some sections are emphasized more than others

Tip 6: Report main findings in results

- Present the findings relevant to the research question(s)
- If you conducted exploratory analyses, provide concise statements of the findings.



Tip 7: Ensure discussion is clear and concise

- Begin by providing an interpretation of your results
 - What have we learned from your research?
- Do not repeat results
 - Situate the findings to the literature
 - How do your findings expand our perspective
 - Briefly present ways in which future studies can build upon your work and address limitations in your study

Tip 8: Limit number of references

- Journals limit the number of citations
 - Choose the most relevant (and recent) citations
- Make sure the citations are formatted correctly

References

Cornett, B. (2009). *Reptile knowledge: Reptile conservation and care information*. Retrieved from <http://www.reptileknowledge.com>

Rodda, G H. (2009). What parts of the US mainland are climatically suitable for invasive alien pythons spreading from Everglades National Park?. *Biological invasions*, 11(2), 241. doi: 10.1080/00140130400029266

Simberloff, D., Schmitz, D. C., & Brown, T. C. (1997). *Strangers in paradise: Impact and management of nonindigenous species in Florida*. Washington, D.C: Island Press.

- Consider using a reference manager system (eg, Mendeley)

Questions to answer before submitting the paper

Authorship

Copyright

Publishing model

Authorship

- Decide at the outset who will be listed as authors of any journal articles that come from degree papers (committee chair, members, academic mentors)
- Ensure complete understanding of roles/responsibilities for manuscript development and submission
- Follow the guidelines developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors to meet the ethical standards of authorship, including these criteria:
 - Substantial contributions to the conception or design or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data
 - Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content
 - Final approval of the version to be published
 - Commitment to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that any questions related to accuracy or integrity are appropriately investigated and resolved

Copyright

Determine for certain who holds the copyright to the dissertation or capstone and whether it is all inclusive—the author, the institution, the funding body? Text, graphics, datasets, methods, or a combination thereof?

Publishers will expect authors to sign copyright forms for journal articles, unless the work is set to open access, so authors must know what rights they have the authority to assign, if any.

Publishing models

Traditional publishing

- Authors publish free of charge
- Institutions and individuals pay for content by subscribing to journals

Open access publishing

- Author (or institution/funding agency) pays a publication fee and retains copyright
- Article is made freely available to all online
- Some journals publish exclusively open access
- Most subscription journals offer open access options

Gold open access

- After submission and peer review, an article publishing charge (APC) is due.
- Upon publication anyone can immediately and permanently access the article online.

Green open access

- After submission and peer review in a subscription journal, an APC is due and the article is published online.
- Subscribers have immediate access and the article is made open access either through author self-archiving, publisher deposit or linking *at a later time*.

Golden rules

- Keep in mind the interest and expertise of the *journal readers*, not necessarily colleagues or the institutions at which the doctoral work was done
- Follow a journal's guide for authors closely on format, word count, references, etc.
- Consult an experienced *author* before submitting to a journal; do not rely on faculty mentors who have not published something themselves
- Ask someone who speaks the language in which the journal is published to review the submission, or consider using a professional language service

Golden rules continued

- Present content that is current, clear, practical, and meaningful
- Emphasize what is new in order to justify publication—answer the “so what?” question
- Ensure that the text for the aims, most of the literature review, and all of the findings and discussion sections are different for each manuscript submitted for publication
- Use language that is interpretable from a scientific perspective and free of bias

Elsevier resources

researcheracademy.elsevier.com

elsevier.com/authors

elsevier.com/reviewers

elsevier.com/editors

researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/ethics/authorship

researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/ethics/content-ownership

researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/open-science/open-access-navigating-journal-landscape

Other resources

www.grammarly.com

www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/introducing-work

writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/resources

jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2667044

Use of AI tools

Elsevier's policies for authors, editors and reviewers on Generative AI

Authors

When **applied responsibly and with human oversight**, we support the use of AI tools by authors, including AI agents and deep research tools, to synthesize literature, identify research gaps, generate ideas, and assist with content structuring and language polishing. However, please note:

AI is **not a substitute** for human critical thinking.

Authors are **responsible and accountable** for the content of the manuscript, including accountability for:

- Thoroughly **reviewing and verifying the accuracy** of all AI-generated output
- Editing and adapting all material to ensure the paper represents the authors' **authentic** and **original** contribution
- **Disclosing** the use of AI upon submission - a statement will be placed in the published article for transparency
- Ensuring data privacy, IP and other rights by **checking the Terms & Conditions** of any AI tool they use

Our AI author policy was updated in September 2025 to reflect how AI is advancing and to support authors in safe and responsible use.



Where to find Elsevier's GenAI Policies for Journals:

- [Generative AI policies for journals](#)
- Further guidance can be found in the [Elsevier Responsible AI Principles](#)

Please note that if AI tools are used to analyze and draw insights from data as part of the research process, this should be disclosed and described in detail in the methods section.

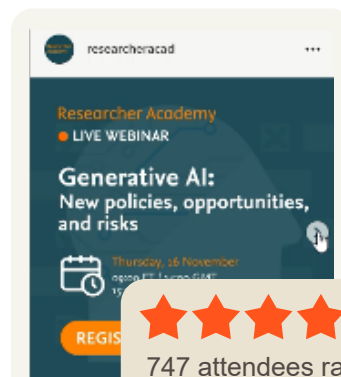
Use of AI tools

Promoting responsible use and raising policy awareness

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

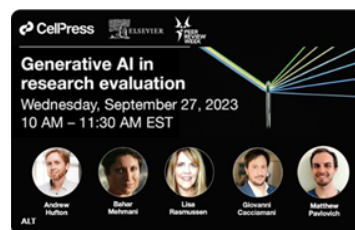
During preparation of the revised submission, the author (AJL) used ChatGPT, provided by OpenAI, to improve grammar and readability of the manuscript. After using this service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Information about the new policy and disclosure instructions have been added to the **Guide for Authors** of our journals and a notification has been added to the submission journey in **Editorial Manager**.



747 attendees rate the webinar 4.5 out of 5 stars

Live Author Webinar on GenAI organized by Elsevier in November '23 – Recording is available on [Elsevier Researcher Academy](#)



Online Panel Discussion on GenAI in September '23 organized by Elsevier and Cell Press (650 attendees)

Thank you.