

## WELCOME!

Are you interested in online education? If yes, please consider submitting your work to [the Journal of Educators Online](#) to share with policy-makers, professional instructors, students and academics. This document offers tips on forms of submissions and how to get a favorable review.

## ARTICLE TYPES

Articles for [the Journal of Educators Online](#) typically represent one of the following areas:

- **Professional Development:** "How-to" pieces that inform/instruct readers on processes related to online education (includes software application). Examples may include developing course content/training programs, using a particular online delivery method, designing an online participant outcomes process. A professional development article generally is limited to 20 pages and must include a 250-word descriptive abstract.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Considered "traditional" scholarly research article, using quantitative (e.g., statistical and survey methods) and/or qualitative (e.g., case studies) methods. A research and evaluation article generally is limited to 20 pages and must include a 250-word descriptive abstract.
- **Commentary:** Presents an opinion piece of no more than 1,000 words, providing a person's or organization's point of view on a topic of interest to [the Journal of Educators Online](#) readers.
- **Reviews:** Reviews and critiques of books, journal articles, and other current media. A review should be no longer than 1,000 words.

While the four types of articles vary in purpose and structure, authors can enhance their likelihood of receiving a favorable review by careful writing and organization of the initial draft. Read on for some valuable tips to improve your article for submission.

## RECEIVING A FAVORABLE REVIEW

Once you've gotten the idea and settled on an article format, it's time to think about preparing the manuscript for submission. Following are tips for a favorable review in [the Journal of Educators Online](#):

- **Write in a clear, easy-to-read style.** This is true regardless of the type of article you submit. If you submit a research and evaluation piece, a good model to follow is this: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion/conclusions (sometimes the introduction and literature review sections are combined). For professional development articles, state the problem, your objectives, how you met your

objectives, and what you learned from the process. For review and commentary articles, the most important aspect is to support your stated views.

- **Do not oversell your work.** Provide an accurate journal title and abstract. Be clear in what you will cover in your statement of purpose so that the reader knows what to expect and does not ‘over expect’, thus being disappointed upon reading your article.
- **Write for the journal; follow its guidelines.** For [the Journal of Educators Online](#), some of the requirements include writing in American Psychological Association style; adhering to the page or word requirements for the commentary, research and evaluation, professional development, and reviews sections; and writing articles that pertain to the interest areas of online education.
- **Write for the audience.** Know their interest and technical level. Choose a journal outlet that best suits the purpose and positioning of your paper and content.
- **Break new ground.** What’s lacking in the literature that you’re trying to address? What is new about your topic? The only way to find out is by doing some research of similar studies or projects. That’s why a literature review is important; to determine what new ground you’re breaking with your research or project.
- **Emphasize what’s really important.** Cut the "unimportant" or "fun-to-know" things from your paper. Focus the topic. To determine this, ask if you have answered your research questions or met your project’s objectives. If you’ve included a lot more than just the answers to your research questions or the fulfilled objectives, you may need to 'trim some of the fat.'
- **This is also true of the literature review.** Avoid the ‘term paper’ approach – provide the readers with a brief overview of the current literature as most readers are likely aware of what has already been written. Readers interested in greater detail will use your references. Readers are far more interested in your findings.
- **Provide a clear, concise abstract.** Some people don’t think an abstract is all that important, but actually it’s probably the most important part of your publication. If you cannot write an understandable, concise abstract, it’s likely that your paper is not adequately focused.
- **Abstracts**, in 200 to 250 words, should include the purpose, methods (questionnaire, readership survey), population (target group), and major results. Sometimes a conclusion is provided in the abstract. A good way to write an abstract is to include the following:
  - The purpose of this project was....
  - The objectives of this project were....
  - "Such and such" audience was surveyed.
  - Results indicate...

The following sections provide more detailed information on the four types of articles published in [the Journal of Educators Online](#). Addressing the items discussed below will improve your manuscript and simplify the review process.

## WRITING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ARTICLES

Professional development articles form the majority of submitted papers and play a key informative role to our readership. It is here that professionals can share their experiences with

their projects. For effective professional development or "how-to" articles, answer the following questions:

- **How much does your readership/audience know about this topic or project?** You need to consider this because you know your subject very well. It may be difficult for readers to understand what you're writing about if you assume your readers know as much as you do. A secondary question would be: How much background information is necessary for the readers to understand the project and approach?
- **What prompted the project?** Provide as much background as necessary to establish the need for the project.
- **What did you do? What were the results?** This is the substance of a professional development or "how-to" piece. Provide a detailed, step-by-step approach of how you or your institution handled the project or problem.
- **Present the results as a discussion, not just a listing of results.** Readers find lists tedious and will sometimes fail to make the link between what you have found and what your original question/hypothesis was.
- **How do you want readers to use the information?** What tips could you give? Provide your readers with some suggestions on how they can use in their jobs what you did.
- **What did you learn? What would you do the same or different?** Do a little self-analysis. Tell readers what would be the same or different if you had to do it all over.
- **Can this project be generalized, or is your situation unique?** For example, a specific scenario may be unique to your institution, but what you did to resolve the issue could be generalized to other contexts. However, there may be some components of a project or problem that would never happen or would be highly unlikely to happen at your or another institution.

For each Professional development manuscript, [the Journal of Educators Online](#) reviewers will expect the following;

#### Relevance to educators online:

- deal with an important major issue, problem, or subject;
- appeal to a wide audience or a significant specialized group;
- contribute to the quality of continuing education, staff development, or training;
- expand previous knowledge;
- Depict subject or method of lasting significance.

#### Evidence of scholarship:

- adequate statement of problem or subject;
- appropriate identification of the author's assumptions and frame of reference;
- adequate methodology;
- knowledge of relevant literature;
- Consistent treatment of the problem statement, content, and conclusions.

## WRITING RESEARCH AND EVALUATION ARTICLES

A primary goal of applied research is to develop new knowledge or a new understanding of a relevant topic. All readers may benefit greatly by reading and using applied e-learning research findings in their work.

For instance, a corporate trainer might use survey research to assess participant preferences for a particular online learning method. An administrator might use focus groups to assess ideal online layout preferences. Or a policy maker might use content analysis to assess online competitor performance for benchmarking purposes.

Even though research methods and topics vary widely, nearly all research articles can be made more readable if writers follow a few common guidelines. For effective research and evaluation articles, answer the following questions:

- **Are the goals and purpose of your research clear?** Always ensure clarity by providing a clear problem statement. Devote one paragraph at the end of the introduction to telling readers the specific purpose and objectives for your research, and how it can help them.
- **Have you conducted and reported a thorough review of literature on your topic?** Just as news stories should attribute key facts and opinions to objective sources, research and evaluation articles must be carefully documented. Cite other journal articles, technical reports, books, or presentations relevant to your subject. If there are few sources, say so. That is, it is essential that your work be related to prior research.
- **Have you provided key details about the methodology used in the study?** Not all readers will be equally interested in the research methods used in your study. However, interested readers should be able to read the methodology and conduct the same study on their own if they choose to do so. If your methodology does not provide enough information for a reader to replicate your study, you should add the necessary details.
- **What conclusions should the reader draw from your findings?** Some of the [Journal of Educators Online](#) readers may read only the introduction and conclusions of your article. Use the conclusions to provide a concise summary of your findings. But don't stop there. Tell readers how to interpret and use these findings. Did your research have any unexpected or surprising findings? Do the results have practical implications for readers? Spell these things out for your readers.
- **Include a section on limitations.** If you have used students or a sample that is limited in terms of generalizability, discuss it. Why did you use this sample, is it a pilot project, why could you potentially generalize?
- **Include a section on future research.** What will you do next to 1) strengthen the current study, 2) expand the current study, and 3) investigate unexpected findings, etc.

## WRITING COMMENTARIES AND REVIEWS

The [Journal of Educators Online](#)'s 'Commentary' section, as with most commentary sections, focuses on leading edge material that is provocative, leaving the reader hungry for answers to the complex issues raised. The most important aspect of writing a commentary is leaving an impact with your reader. In essence, you want to convince the reader to take a specific action or to reach a certain conclusion about an issue. This usually takes one of three forms:

- To reinforce a reader's belief.
- To change a reader's belief.
- To move your reader to action.

To successfully write commentaries, here are some points to consider:

- Avoid subjects that can be determined immediately by available factual material. For example, "Octavia Orange is 6'1" tall." That's a fact. You can't argue the point. Write on something that people can have an opinion about.
- Avoid 'no-win topics' (personal judgments), those for which no conclusion can be reached. No-win topics are usually tied to feelings and are difficult to argue, based on the criteria established. For example, "My home is more beautiful than yours." How can a person argue that? The criteria for determining what "more beautiful" means are personal and subjective.
- Appeal to the interests and intelligence of the reader.
- Cite reputable authority and include evidence. Persuade the reader to accept your conclusion by bringing into play evidence provided by respected and reputable experts.

Many of the rules for writing commentaries also apply to reviews. Keep in mind that the major purposes of the review are to inform your readers about a book, software or journal article's content and provide them with reasons to read it or not to read it. A review should include the following components:

- Author's name, title of the book, software or article, publisher, and publication date.
- Summary of the article, software or book's content.
- Evaluation of the content, emphasizing its relevance to the [Journal of Educators Online](#) readers.
- At the end of the review, your overall impression of the article or content. The question to ask here is, "Does the book or article's content accomplish its stated goals?" If the book is about newsletter writing, do you — the reader — gain a better understanding of how to write newsletters through reading the book? If not, then you probably will want to give the book a poor review.

## REVISING AND RESUBMITTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

If you are asked to resubmit an manuscript with revisions, don't take it personally. The reviewers may have questions that need further elaboration. They may think that the article's content is not applicable to [the Journal of Educators Online](#), or the manuscript is not well written.

### Calm Down

In any case, avoid the temptation to throw the manuscript out; rewrite and resubmit. You've already put effort into the piece; evaluate what the reviewers suggest and resubmit. If reviewers indicate that [the Journal of Educators Online](#) is not the journal for your manuscript, then submit it to another journal. There are hundreds of journals in the United States alone, and one of these could be a possibility for your article. A useful starting point may be to consult one of *Cabell's*

Publishing Directories; or a listing of e-learning journals at;  
<http://home.surewest.net/tcsmith/mags.htm> .

In general, authors should attempt to follow a reviewer's advice when revising the article. Reviewers will approach your manuscript from a fresh perspective, so it's important to consider their suggestions carefully. Many of their concerns can be satisfied with the addition of a definition, sentence, or footnote to clarify meaning. In such cases, authors should simply take the time to make the revision. Other suggested revisions may require more time and effort. Perhaps a vague concept needs to be explained more fully or a methodology requires a more complete description. Such revisions also often require additional citations or references. At times, suggested revisions may require reorganizing or rewriting sections of the article. Revisions of this type can require significant work and patience on the part of the author. It's also important to keep in mind that hardly any manuscripts are accepted by any peer-reviewed journals without some revision.

On occasion, authors might disagree with a reviewer's suggestion. This may be particularly true for major revisions that are suggested by only one reviewer. In such a case, the author must make a decision as to whether the revision will or will not be made. As indicated earlier, the usual course of action is to make the revision based on the idea that it will improve the manuscript. After all, any point or argument that confuses a reviewer is likely to confuse a reader. However, there is another side to this issue. Reviewers, like authors, can make mistakes. And, as with any other creative activity, the review process is subjective. If an author feels strongly that a particular suggested revision will not improve the quality or clarity of an article, he or she may exercise the option to disregard the suggestion and appeal to the editor. In such a case, the author/s incorporates all other suggested revisions and describes them and the disregarded suggestion (the latter clearly justified and documented) in the resubmission cover letter.

### Resubmission Cover Letter

The resubmission cover letter to the editor is used to explain how the author responded to reviewers' suggestions in revising the article. In general, the author should specify in the letter how revisions were carried out to improve the article's readability, accuracy, and style. It's also important to mention any revisions made to the abstract, tables, or figures. If suggested revisions are few, the resubmission cover letter may be only one page long. However, if there are a variety of suggested revisions made by different reviewers, it is not unusual for the letter to be three or more pages long to explain how the suggestions were dealt with in the revised article.

The resubmission cover letter is particularly important for discussing any suggested revisions that the author did not make. The author should clearly specify any suggested revisions that were not made and provide a clear rationale for the decision to disregard the suggestion. If the editor feels that the author was justified in disregarding the suggestion, based on the rationale given, he or she may also disregard the reviewer's suggestion and judge the resubmission accordingly. If he or she sides with the reviewer, the article is likely to be returned to the author with a second request to make the revision. In cases where the editor is not sure, the article may be sent for a second review.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Through commentaries and opinion pieces, the journal offers an avenue to discuss and debate important, sometimes controversial, issues facing online education today. Professional development articles can suggest easier, more efficient ways to do our jobs, while research articles increase our knowledge base on various subjects relevant to online education. Reviews provide a brief "preview" of a book, software or journal article that could be relevant to our work.

While there is significant variation in the content and scope of articles sought by the journal, nearly all content could be greatly improved by observing the guidelines and tips discussed here. See below for a summary of this advice. Following these guidelines in the first draft of a submission means less work for the author and reviewers and ensures that timely articles will be published more quickly.

## **Author Checklist for Initial and Subsequent Article Submissions**

### **Initial Submission**

- Article has not been published or submitted to another journal.
- A copy of the manuscript e-mailed (as an attachment) to [the Journal of Educators Online](#) editor, Matt Elbeck at [melbeck@troy.edu](mailto:melbeck@troy.edu).
- Abstract is clearly written and contains no more than 300 words.
- Article title is clear and descriptive.
- Appropriate headings and subheadings are used throughout.
- A concise problem statement and study objectives are provided near the end of the introduction.
- In-text and end-of-article references are formatted according to American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines.
- Article is edited carefully for accuracy and readability.
- Tables, when used, are formatted logically and provided on separate pages at the end of the article.
- One paragraph author biography

### **Article Resubmission**

- The article is revised and resubmitted as an e-mail attachment in a timely manner.
- Article has been carefully revised in accordance with all the reviewers' suggestions.
- A resubmission cover letter is attached that describes how revisions were made and/or provides a rationale for any suggested revisions not made.

We hope you found this note informative and useful, and we look forward to your work!  
Our website is [www.thejeo.com](http://www.thejeo.com), and the editor is Matthew Elbeck, e-mail [melbeck@troy.edu](mailto:melbeck@troy.edu)

**Sources:**

Ricky Telg, Mark Tucker and Joyce Dolbier, **Successful Writing for the *Journal of Applied Communications***, *Journal of Applied Communications*, December 2001. The complete article may be found at:

[www.canr.msu.edu/aegradstudent/files/Successful%20Writing%20for%20the%20Journal%20of%20Applied%20Co](http://www.canr.msu.edu/aegradstudent/files/Successful%20Writing%20for%20the%20Journal%20of%20Applied%20Co)

The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education, at

<http://www.temple.edu/professionaldevelopment/>