

Academic Publishing and Journals: An Introduction

Summary

This document provides an overview of the academic publishing landscape. It outlines key aspects of academic publishing including journal types, authorship requirements and what happens when a paper is submitted for review. It also considers issues related to open access arrangements, ethical review requirements, publication fees and authorship. The intended audience is researchers based in local authorities and other community settings. It may also be useful to postgraduate students and others who are new to academic publishing.

Key takeaways:

- Academic publishing offers one of several routes to sharing research findings
- Academic publishing could be worth considering if your findings are particularly novel or important, you want to contribute to global debates, and you have time available for drafting and revisions
- Journal articles are ‘peer reviewed’, which means that your work is assessed by other experts and only published if it meets required standards
- In choosing the right journal, things to consider include journal aims and scope, target audience, publication fees and open access arrangements
- Other considerations include ethical review requirements, authorship criteria and publication timescales
- Publishing costs are funded through subscription (pay-to-read), open access (pay-to-publish) or hybrid funding models
- ‘Self-archiving’ (green open access) offers a potential route to open access for those who do not have funding to cover Article Processing Charges (APCs)
- The final section provides links to additional resources and guidance

This document forms part of a series of resources developed by SCPH to support the dissemination of research findings to different audiences. The full range of resources can be found on our website.

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1. Introduction

This document provides an overview of the academic publishing landscape. It outlines key aspects including journal and article types, peer review processes and authorship criteria. It also considers issues related to open access, ethical review requirements and Article Processing Charges (APCs). The intended audience is local authority researchers and those based in other community settings. It may also be useful to postgraduate students and others who are new to academic publishing.

What is academic publishing?

Academic publishing offers one of several routes to sharing research findings. It comes in different forms including journal articles, books, book chapters and conference proceedings. The purpose is to share new research findings with other researchers, develop theoretical insights and contribute to ongoing debates.

The most common type of academic publishing is written journal articles. Journals usually focus on a particular topic, methodology or sector. Some journals publish physical print versions called 'issues' (usually quarterly or monthly), which look like short books or magazines. Other journals are online-only. The main type of journal article is called an 'original research article', which presents new research findings. Other article formats include literature reviews, book reviews, debate pieces and short commentaries. An overview of different article types is provided in Appendix A.

Journal articles differ from many other forms of dissemination because they are usually 'peer reviewed'. This means that your work is assessed by other experts in your area of research and only published if it meets the journal's required standards. Considerations include methodological rigour, research ethics and the contribution your paper makes to the existing evidence base. You may see these types of journals referred to as 'scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals', to distinguish them from predatory journals (see later description) and those which are not peer-reviewed.

When should I consider academic publishing and what are the alternatives?

Academic publishing might be worth considering if you:

- have novel or important findings that you want to share with other researchers
- want to contribute to global debates in your area of interest

- have time and capacity available for drafting and revisions
- are interested in receiving feedback from others on your work
- would like to publish for personal or career development reasons
- don't mind waiting a while for the final publication

Alternatives to academic publishing include uploading research reports or summaries of your findings to a (personal or organisational) website or repository. You could also consider policy briefings, newsletters, blogs, podcasts or public events as ways to share your findings. The most appropriate dissemination route depends on a range of factors including target audience, novelty of the findings, preferred timescales and how much capacity you have available for drafting and revisions. Further guidance on dissemination routes for different audiences can be found on our website.

2. Choosing the right journal

What types of journal are there?

There are many thousands of academic journals, across a diverse range of disciplines, subject areas and methodologies. Journals may focus on a particular topic (e.g. public health or youth studies), methodology (e.g. mixed methods or ethnography) or sector (e.g. local government or the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector). Journals are often grouped into 'families' according to their publisher. Some of the largest publishers include Elsevier, Wiley, SAGE, Springer Nature and Taylor & Francis.

Each journal has its own specific aims, which are usually published on their website. Researchers are invited to submit articles for consideration that contribute to the journal's aims. Target audience varies depending on the journal. The main audience for most journals is usually academic researchers, though some journals are also aimed at practitioners or policymakers. *Public Health in Practice* (Elsevier) is an example of a practitioner-focused public health journal. Many journals are international in focus, while others focus on one specific country or region (such as the UK).

Open access vs subscription journals

Journals are funded through either a subscription, open access or hybrid funding model.

Subscription journals – Historically, subscription has been the traditional publishing model. This means that readers pay to access a journal's publications via a paid subscription, usually through their organisation or a

library. Subscription journals do not generally charge authors to publish their work because the costs are covered by the reader. This is sometimes referred to as the 'pay-to-read' model. Subscription-only journals are rare in public health, with open access usually being the preferred funding model. Subscription journals are more common in other disciplines such as social sciences.

Open access journals - Open access journals (sometimes referred to as 'gold open access') have become a popular way to make research findings more accessible, particularly to those outside of academia. Open access (or 'gold open access') means that readers can access articles free of charge. In this model, the author covers the costs of publication - usually through payment of an Article Processing Charge (APC). This is sometimes referred to as the 'pay-to-publish' model. Many large research funders (including NIHR and UKRI) require findings to be published open access as a condition of funding. Examples of fully open access journals in public health include *Public Health in Practice* (Elsevier) and *BMC Public Health* (Springer Nature).

Hybrid journals - Finally, some journals offer a hybrid system where the author can choose which option works best for them: pay-to-publish (open access) or pay-to-read (subscription). Hybrid journals publish a combination of articles in each issue, including those which are freely available (where the author has paid for open access) and those which require a reader subscription. Examples of hybrid journals in public health include *Journal of Public Health* (Oxford Academic) and *Public Health* (Elsevier).

How do I choose the right journal?

Choosing the right journal for your work can be challenging. It is often recommended to choose your target journal before you start writing. This means you can tailor your draft to the journal's specific requirements, which can vary widely across journals and publishers. Some things to consider include:

- where other researchers in your field are publishing their work
- the journal's aims, scope and target audience
- types of article that the journal publishes
- publication fees
- open access arrangements (if required)
- ethical review requirements
- practical specifications (e.g. word count)
- impact factors

Looking at where other researchers in your area of interest publish their work can be a useful place to start. This allows you to position your research as part of an ongoing ‘conversation’, which can be helpful in convincing journal editorial teams that your work is important. When scoping the existing literature, consider making a note of the main journals that publish articles on your topic of interest. You can then explore the aims and scope, author requirements and latest publications on each journal’s website, to get a feel for which option might be the best fit. If you know of any academic researchers working in your topic area, you could also look up their recent publications (e.g. on their university profile) or ask them directly for journal recommendations.

Journal impact factors

Another potential consideration is a journal’s ‘impact factor’ (IF or JIF). This statistical metric is calculated based on how many times a journal’s articles are cited by other authors. Impact factors are often used to indicate a journal’s prestige or importance in its field. They can be particularly important to academics, as IFs contribute to a university’s [‘Research Excellence Framework’](#) (REF) ranking. This in turn influences the university’s reputation for research excellence and how much government funding it receives. It is worth noting however that IFs measure impact through citations by other authors, rather than ‘real-world’ impact as it might be understood outside of academia. Because of this, practitioner-focused journals can sometimes have low impact ratings even though they might be influential in policy or practice.

3. Key things to consider

Ethical review requirements

Research ethics is a key consideration for journal editorial teams. Some journals require all of their published research to have undergone formal ethical review as part of the research process. If your research has involved collaboration with academic researchers, or if you are doing certain types of NHS or social care research, it is likely that your project will have gone through some form of independent ethical review. This may have been via a university ethics system or an [NHS Research Ethics Committee](#).

In local authority or other community settings, opportunities for independent review by a research ethics committee do not always exist. Journal requirements can therefore be challenging to navigate if you are based outside academia. In developing this document, we contacted editorial offices of several journals to ask for guidance (including Wiley, Elsevier, Springer

Nature, BMJ Journals and Oxford Academic publishers). Most publishers told us that they require *either* formal ethical approval, *or* an explanation as to why

it wasn't sought. One exception was Springer Nature (including *BMC Public Health*), who confirmed that all research with human participants must have been approved by – or granted an exemption by – an appropriate ethics committee. Due to wide variation in experience described by local authority colleagues, we recommend that you check individual journal policies before you start writing and contact their editorial office for further guidance if required.

It is important to remember that, even if you are able to provide suitable justification for ethical review not being sought,¹ you will still need to clearly demonstrate how ethical standards were upheld in your research. This includes principles such as avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, upholding rights and dignity, and responsible data management. If you can't clearly demonstrate how you addressed these principles, it is unlikely that your article will get through the review process. It is therefore critical to ensure that ethical principles are embedded in your research at every stage.

Alternative article types, such as a debate pieces or commentaries, don't always have the same ethical requirements as original research articles. We recommend checking individual author guidelines for different article types and contacting the editorial team if required, as expectations vary from journal to journal.

Note that some healthcare journals (including BMJ Open) also require a statement on how public and patient involvement and engagement (PPIE) informed the research process. This is considered part of a global movement towards the active involvement of patients and the public in shaping research. More information can be found [here](#).

Publication fees and Article Processing Charges (APCs)

Article Processing Charges (APCs) are used to cover publishing costs for open access journal articles. While considered an essential funding mechanism to enable open access, APCs can create a barrier for authors who do not have such funds available. If you are in this position, some initial possibilities to explore include:

¹ This justification might include that independent review structures do not exist, and/or that independent review is not required, in your research setting.

- if you are working with academic co-authors, check whether they can access any internal funds to cover the APC (sometimes universities have financial agreements with specific publishers, or other available funding)
- if you are applying for external research funding, check if you can include APCs in your costings (some funders allow this, including NIHR)
- check with the editorial office of your target journal whether any discounts or waivers are available for authors working outside of academia

In developing this document, we asked journal editorial offices about any APC waivers or discounts available to researchers outside of academia. Most publishers told us that they subscribe to a specific scheme ([Research4Life](#)), which offers waivers to authors in lower-income countries and therefore does not apply to UK-based researchers. That said, some mentioned that situations are judged on a case-by-case basis. You could therefore consider asking if a discount is available, even though the chances of success may be fairly low.

Avoiding APCs: Self-archiving option

While Article Processing Charges (APCs) are mandatory for fully open access journals, subscription journals do not generally charge authors to publish their work.

The steps below provide an open access option for authors where funding is not available to cover APCs. This process is referred to as ‘self-archiving’ or ‘green open access’ and is regularly followed by academic researchers:²

1. Choose a subscription or hybrid journal which allows publication at no cost to the author (this should be the case for most subscription and hybrid journals)
2. Check that the journal allows for sharing of the author-accepted manuscript and that you are happy with the terms (usually this includes an embargo period – see author guidelines for details, usually under ‘Article Sharing’ or similar)
3. Upon submission of your draft paper, select the ‘subscription’ funding option (which should be at no cost to the author)
4. Include a creative commons rights retention statement at the end of your paper (usually CC-BY and usually included in the ‘Funding’ or ‘Acknowledgements’ section – see author guidelines)³

² Note that a small number of journals automatically make their articles open access after a defined embargo period (referred to as ‘delayed open access’ or ‘bronze open access’). However, it is more common for researchers to self-archive using the steps described.

³ This might say something like, ‘*For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version*

5. After the embargo period, upload a copy of the author-accepted manuscript (AAM) to somewhere that is open access (such as a personal or organisational website, or a repository such as [ResearchGate](#) or [Google Scholar](#))
6. You can then share the link to the author-accepted manuscript, providing an open access way for people to read your work

The 'author-accepted manuscript' (AAM) describes the final draft which has been reviewed and accepted for publication by the journal, but before copyediting (i.e. without the journal's logo, formatting etc). Most journals allow this process, though usually subject to an embargo period of 6-12 months.

During the embargo period, the article is only available to journal subscribers. See journal author guidelines for author rights retention details, including what is permitted and any required embargo period.

Note that embargo periods apply to the author-accepted manuscript itself and wouldn't necessarily prevent authors from sharing early findings in other formats (for example, an emerging findings summary or policy briefing on your organisation's website). Expectations are generally that the journal submission would be suitably different from other publicly available documents for it to be considered original work. This would usually be the case if you are drawing upon academic literature, theory or an analytical framework in your journal submission. Check author guidelines for additional information if you have any questions about originality requirements.

It is worth noting that lot of healthcare journals, including public health, have moved to fully open access in recent years. This means that APCs are usually mandatory for all authors. At the time of writing, exceptions include *Journal of Public Health* (Oxford Academic) and *Public Health* (Elsevier), which operate a hybrid model. This means that the steps above can be followed. Fully open access journals are less common in other disciplines, so you could also consider subscription or hybrid journals in your specific topic area (e.g. housing, transport, education, youth studies) or a public management journal such as *Public Money and Management* or *Local Government Studies*.

Navigating authorship

Navigating authorship can be very complex and approaches vary widely across teams, organisations and disciplines. Most journals publish clear guidelines on what constitutes authorship (see individual journal author guidelines for details). Authorship is usually defined as having made a

arising from this submission.' Some journals suggest standard statement wording – see author guidelines.

significant contribution to both the paper and the underpinning research. This commonly includes:

- a) Substantial contribution to the design/conception of the underpinning research, or its delivery (e.g. data collection, analysis) *and*
- b) Substantial contribution to drafting of the paper, or providing important intellectual content *and*
- c) Reviewing and agreeing all versions, including draft and final published versions *and*
- d) Agreement to be held accountable for all aspects of the work (ICMJE, 2026)

The lead author would usually be the person who has contributed most to the work. They are also usually responsible for coordinating submission and communicating with the journal during the peer review process (often referred to as the 'corresponding author' in journal guidelines). Some journals require details of the contribution of each co-author to be submitted alongside the draft manuscript, to ensure that authorship is allocated fairly.

People who do not meet the definition of authorship but have helped you in some way (for example by proof-reading, editing or providing general guidance) can be included in the 'Acknowledgements' section at the end of the paper.

Working in partnership with academic co-authors can be beneficial if the opportunity is available. Academic colleagues may be able to provide support on key aspects including ethical review, journal choice, theoretical contributions (which are required by some journals), support towards publication costs (if available), and navigating the complexity of the review process.

Timescales and reviewer expectations

It is important to recognise that academic publishing can take a long time, due to the in-depth and cyclical nature of the peer review process. Exact timescales vary depending on the journal and publisher. It is not uncommon for this process to take a year or more from initial submission to final publication. Contributing to this timeframe is the voluntary nature of reviewing and journal editing, which is often undertaken outside of academics' paid time. It can be challenging for journal editors to find enough reviewers, or reviewers with the right expertise, particularly as the number of submissions has substantially increased over time.

If you have a paper accepted for publication, it is likely that you will receive an invitation to act as a reviewer for future journal submissions in your field of

research. The publishing system relies on this sense of reciprocity within the research community. Some journals publish regular acknowledgements to thank those who have supported them as reviewers. Reviewing can also be useful for personal development and provides a way to stay up to date with current developments in your field.

Avoiding predatory journals

Something to look out for in the publishing landscape is what are referred to as 'predatory' journals. [Predatory journals](#) profit from exploiting the open access model, by charging high fees for publication without corresponding editorial services, quality control or peer-review processes (Elmore and Weston, 2020). Some ways to spot predatory journals include unrealistic stated publication timeframes, promises to publish all submissions, and/or published articles with lots of spelling or grammatical errors. It can be worthwhile to be wary of any journal that contacts you directly (especially by name) when you are not expecting it. Legitimate journals rarely contact researchers unannounced.

4. What happens when I submit a paper for publication?

Getting your draft ready for submission

Once you have decided on your target journal, a key initial step is to go through the author guidelines. These are found on the journal's homepage (website) and may be called something like 'Instructions for authors', 'Author guidelines' or 'Submission guidelines.' The guidelines are usually very detailed and cover everything you need to know about how and what to submit (e.g. word counts, article structure, subheadings, formatting, referencing style). Requirements can vary widely, so it is important to check the guidelines carefully and make sure you follow them. Alongside your draft paper, you will usually be required to develop an abstract (approx. 100-200 words) and suggest some key words to summarise your research. Practitioner-focused journals may also request a lay summary or 'implications for practice' (usually formatted as bullet points).

Online submission

Most journals operate an online submission system, which requires you to sign-up for an account the first time you submit. The 'corresponding author' (usually the lead author) is responsible for this process. You will be asked to complete various details, including details of any co-authors, and then upload

your draft (usually as a Word document). Co-authors may receive an email notification or request for confirmation of their authorship. The peer review process is usually anonymous (sometimes referred to as 'double-blind' peer review). You may be asked to submit two copies of your manuscript – one complete copy and one with any names or identifying details removed. The anonymised version is the one that is sent to reviewers. Some journals also require a short covering letter, outlining why they should consider your submission (see author guidelines).

Initial decision

Once you have followed the steps for online submission and uploaded your draft manuscript, one of two things will happen. The draft will either be rejected because it doesn't fit the journal's scope or interests (sometimes referred to as being 'desk rejected'), or it will proceed to the peer review stage. You will usually be notified by email of the initial decision. Timescales vary and it can take anything from a couple of weeks to a few months for the initial decision.

Peer review process

If your draft proceeds to peer review, the journal's editorial team will then seek out reviewers with relevant methodological and/or topic expertise. If they agree to review the paper, the reviewers will be given a deadline to upload their initial assessment and recommended outcome (usually 1-2 months, depending on the journal). Editors generally aim to find 2-3 reviewers for each submission.

The peer review process has several potential outcomes: Accept with no revisions (this is rare), accept with minor revisions (this is also rare), accept with major revisions, or reject. The outcome will be communicated to you by email, alongside the reviewers' written comments. If the decision is to accept with revisions, you will be given a deadline to submit a revised draft alongside a response to the reviewers.

There may be several cycles of reviewing and revisions, depending on how much work the reviewers feel your paper needs. After you've revised your draft, it may still be rejected if the reviewers feel that your changes haven't addressed their concerns or suggestions. If your reviewers disagree on the recommended outcome, sometimes the journal editor will make the final decision.

Responding to reviewers

If you are invited to resubmit a revised draft, you will be given a deadline to upload this to the online system. Some journals consider this a 'hard' deadline, whereas others are willing to negotiate (by email) if you feel the deadline isn't feasible. Alongside the revised draft, you will need to provide a detailed response to the reviewers' comments. It is important that you respond to every comment – either to explain how you have addressed it, or to provide a rebuttal for any suggestions you disagree with. You need to do this for each cycle of revisions.

To keep track of this process, authors often create a Word table with reviewer comments in the left-hand column (each comment in a separate row), then add details of how each comment has been addressed in the right-hand column. This can also serve as a checklist and can be particularly helpful when assigning revisions to any co-authors. In your response to reviewers, it is important to consider tone and wording to ensure that you are polite and respectful, even if you may not agree with everything they have said. In your response to the reviewers, you may want to thank them for giving up their time to review your work.

If your paper is accepted

If your paper is accepted for publication, you will receive a PDF 'proof' from the journal's copy editor, usually up to 2-4 weeks after you are notified that the paper has been accepted. This is the intended final version of your paper, edited and formatted in the journal's specific style. You will usually receive a link to an online proofing tool, which allows you to suggest changes directly on the PDF and then approve the final version. There is a quick turnaround for this process (usually between 2-7 days). It is important to check the proof carefully, as you may only get one opportunity to suggest amendments. Sometimes spelling and grammatical errors can creep in during the copyediting and typesetting process. The formatting of any tables or figures may also require particular attention.

Once you have accepted the final proof, you will receive email notification of the paper's publication. This usually happens 1-4 weeks after your acceptance of the final proof. The notification will include a DOI (digital object identifier). This is a unique and permanent numerical identifier, assigned to things like books and journal articles to make them easy to locate. If the journal offers both online and print versions, your article might appear online immediately with a print version following in a later edition.

If your paper is rejected

Academic publishing involves a lot of rejection, so it can be important to prepare yourself for this and try not to take it too personally. Editorial teams receive large volumes of submissions – far more than they are able to review. You might receive several ‘desk rejections’ before you find a journal that is willing to review your draft.

If your draft manuscript is rejected for publication, carefully consider any feedback you may have received from the editorial team or reviewers. If the feedback points to a lack of fit with the journal’s aims/scope, you might consider submitting your draft to a different journal. If the reasons for rejection relate to methodological issues or insufficient data, consider whether these issues could be rectified. If the journal requires greater theoretical underpinning, you could consider looking for a more practice-focused journal – or potentially working with an academic co-author who is familiar with theoretical developments in your research area.

5. References, resources and guidance

General guidance on academic publishing

- NHS England (2023). *Writing for publication* [online resource]. [Writing for publication | Knowledge and Library Services](#). [This provides useful overviews of everything related to academic publishing, written for a practitioner audience. It also includes lots of links to other resources]

Writing guidance

- Boston University School of Public Health (2019). *Public Health Writing Guide*. [PHX-PH-Writing-Guide_Sept-6-2019.pdf](#). [This provides writing tips and guidance, including writing for specific purposes such as research papers, abstracts and letters to editors]

Research ethics

- SCPH (2025). *Designing Ethical Research* [pre-recorded webinar] [Webinar – Designing ethical research](#). [This provides an overview of key ethical principles and how you might address them in your research]
- NHS Health Research Authority (2026). *Do I need NHS REC review?* [online resource]. [Do I need NHS Ethics approval?](#) [This can be a useful decision tool if you are planning research in health or social care settings]

Authorship

- International Council of Medical Journal Editors (2026). *Defining the role of authors and contributors* [online resource]. [ICMJE | Recommendations | Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#). [Note – this definition is used by many large publishers including Sage, Oxford Academic and Taylor & Francis, though check individual journal author guidelines for specific details]
- Taylor & Francis (2026). *Defining authorship in your research paper* [online resource]. [Defining authorship in your research paper – Author Services](#).

Predatory journals

- Elmore, S.A. and Weston, E.H. (2020). Predatory Journals: What They Are and How to Avoid Them. *Toxicology Pathology*, 48(4), 607-610. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0192623320920209>
- Predatory Journals List (2025) <https://www.predatoryjournals.org/> [This website provides a helpful list of journals to avoid, updated by volunteer researchers]

Examples of practitioner-focused journals

- *Public Health in Practice* (Elsevier): [Public Health in Practice | Journal | ScienceDirect.com by Elsevier](#)
- *Public Money and Management* (Taylor & Francis): [Public Money & Management | Journal | Taylor & Francis Online](#)
- *Youth and Policy* (independent non-profit): [Critical analysis of issues and policies relating to young people — Youth & Policy](#)
- *Practice: Social Work in Action* (Taylor & Francis): [Practice | Journal | Taylor & Francis Online](#)

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Appendix A. Journal article types – Examples

Original research article (Sometimes referred to as main research article, original paper etc.)	Original research articles are the most common type of journal article and are usually <i>empirical</i> in nature. This means that new research findings are presented based on the analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data. The findings are used to develop new insights and make recommendations related to theory, policy or practice. Some journals also accept original research articles which are <i>conceptual</i> in nature. For these articles, the main emphasis is on developing new theoretical or conceptual understanding. Original research articles tend to form the bulk of most journal issues, across all topics and disciplines. They usually follow a structured format (such as Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Findings, Discussion, Conclusion). These articles often have the largest word count compared to other article types (usually 3000-8000 words depending on the journal) and are subject to the highest standards of peer review.
Literature review (Sometimes referred to as review article)	Review articles provide a comprehensive summary, review or map of existing evidence on a particular topic. In addition to summarising the literature, this article type usually provides original insights, new perspectives or draws a novel conclusion from the literature. The review might involve a narrative review, systematic review, meta-analysis or another method such as a rapid or realist review. Review articles are often heavily cited by other authors and can help the literature base to evolve, by identifying research gaps and setting new directions for future research. Reviews tend to have similar word counts to original research articles and follow a structured format.
Book review	Some journals invite reviews of recently published books considered to be of interest to the journal's readership (usually within 12-18 months of a new book being published). Book reviews provide an outline of the book's content, alongside critical commentary on its contribution to the field. Book reviews can be considered a useful 'entry-level' article type, allowing new authors to become accustomed to academic writing and get their name known in a particular field (Taylor & Francis, 2026). Book reviews tend to require a written request to the journal's editorial team in advance, to check whether the review would be of interest before you start writing. If the offer is accepted, a free copy of the book would usually be posted out to you. Some journals keep updated lists of books they would like to have reviewed – check individual journal websites for details.

Short reports (Sometimes referred to as rapid communications, brief reports, short communications etc.)	Some journals offer shorter article types which enable the communication of brief findings reports from original research. While the specific name and format varies, these articles are generally concise (approx. 1000–1500 words) and intended to encourage further research on the topic. Short reports often have more flexible formatting requirements than original research articles. Sometimes shorter review timeframes are offered, to enable the sharing of findings which are time sensitive. Specific to public health, examples include the <i>Journal of Public Health</i>’s Short Reports and <i>Public Health in Practice</i>’s Short Communications.
Debate pieces and commentaries	Many journals publish shorter article types which have a core focus on advancing current debates, providing commentary on topical issues, or reacting to other published work on a particular topic. Names and specifications vary widely depending on the journal and discipline, so check for details on your target journal’s website. Note that some journals allow unsolicited submissions for debate articles (e.g. <i>Public Health in Practice</i>’s ‘Commentaries’), while for others they tend to be commissioned by the journal (e.g. <i>BMC Public Health</i>’s ‘Comment’ articles). Debate articles are commonly shorter than original research articles (approx. 1000 words) and aren’t always subject to the same level of peer review. They offer commentary on issues of public and political interest to the journal’s readership, usually expressing an argument supported by evidence or practice examples. Examples include <i>Public Health in Practice</i>’s ‘Policy and Debate’ articles and ‘Commentaries’. Other unique examples include <i>Public Money and Management</i>’s ‘New development’ articles (3500 words), which focus on the evolution of public policy, as well as their ‘Debate’ articles.
Letters to editors and replies	‘Letters to editors’ and ‘replies’ are often the shortest (approx. 750 words) article type. They provide a brief response to a specific, previously published article in the same journal. The response may include a reaction, opinion or alternative argument, alongside supporting information or evidence. If a letter is accepted for publication, usually the author of the original article will receive a copy and be invited to provide a response. Examples include <i>BMC Public Health</i>’s ‘Matters Arising’ and <i>Public Health in Practice</i>’s ‘Letters’.
Practitioner-focused articles	Though still quite novel in some disciplines, there has been an increasing emergence of new article types which place a

	spotlight on the experiences of practitioners and professionals. It is worth keeping an eye out for these, though not all journals currently feature this article type. Current examples include <i>Journal of Public Health</i>'s 'Chekov's corner', which features practitioner perspectives on the intersection between the arts and public health. <i>Public Administration Review</i>'s 'Practically Speaking' focuses on practitioner-academic collaboration in the public sector (example here). <i>Public Money and Management</i>'s 'New development' articles, which focus on the evolution of public policy, are also practitioner-focused (example here). Another example is <i>Work, Employment and Society</i>'s 'On the Frontline' which provides first-person accounts from workers (examples here and here).
<i>Note that article types vary widely across publishers, journals and disciplines. Additional examples include protocols and case reports. See individual journal guidelines for specific article types and related requirements for each, as there is substantial variation in expectations which can't be captured in this summary.</i>	

Sources and additional information:

- Cambridge University Press (2026). *Article Type Definitions* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/open-research/article-type-definitions> (Accessed 22nd June 2026).
- Taylor & Francis (2026). *Different types of research articles: A guide for early career researchers* [online]. Available at: <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/writing-your-paper/different-types-of-research-articles/> (Accessed 22nd June 2026).
- See also individual journal guidelines.

Appendix B. Types of open access

Gold open access	This refers to final publications that are made freely and permanently available on the journal's website to any reader, immediately after publication. Gold open access means there is no subscription or payment required from the reader to access the article. The author is usually required to pay an Article Processing Charge (APC) to cover the costs of publication. Some journals publish gold open access articles only (referred to as 'fully open access' journals). Others offer a hybrid model, combining both gold open access and subscription articles (see below and Section 2 for details).
Hybrid open access	This refers to journals that publish a combination of traditional subscription-based articles (where publication costs are covered by the reader) and gold open access articles (where the author covers publication costs through payment of an APC). In this model, the author can choose whether their article is openly accessible or behind a paywall. See Section 2 for further details.
Green open access	Also referred to as 'self-archiving', green open access refers to the process by which an author can make a version of their journal article freely available for public use. This would usually happen after the final manuscript version has been agreed and formally published by a journal. Self-archiving commonly involves uploading the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) to a repository or website that is open access. Depending on individual journal policies, this process is usually subject to an embargo period (see Section 3 for details and step-by-step guide).
Bronze open access	Also referred to as 'delayed open access', bronze open access is a less common form of open access. It refers to journals with a subscription or hybrid model, where articles are <i>automatically</i> converted to open access after a defined embargo period. Another variation is where articles may be made openly accessible for an initial period, then revert to subscription-only access. Bronze open access does not usually involve a formal creative commons license, therefore the publisher retains the right to restrict or remove open access (IADT, 2026). This model is fairly unusual, with authors tending to use the green open access (self-archiving) approach as an alternative.
Diamond / Platinum open access	Also referred to as platinum open access, diamond open access refers to journals where articles are made accessible immediately in the same way as gold open access. However, in this scenario neither the reader nor the author is required to pay for the costs of publication. This non-profit approach is currently quite rare. Where it exists, it is usually community-driven by academic institutions, library consortiums or philanthropists (IADT, 2026). An action plan for future development of this approach by Science Europe can be found here. One current UK example is Edinburgh Diamond, developed by staff and students at Edinburgh University.

Sources and further information:

- IADT Library (2026). *Publishing through Open Access: Routes to Open Access – the different types* [online]. Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. Available at: <https://iadt.libguides.com/oa/types> (Accessed 22nd June 2026).
- University of Sheffield (2026). *Open Access key terms* [online]. Available at: <https://sheffield.ac.uk/library/open-access/key-terms> (Accessed 22nd June 2026).
- See also individual journal guidelines.

Appendix C. Flowchart – Review process

