

A Book Review of "Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A guide to Academic Publishing Success"

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In "Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success" the author, Wendy Laura Belcher, walks the reader through an intensive 12-week program consisting of various tasks that need to be undertaken in order to successfully publish an academic paper. While the author states that the guide was primarily developed to aid graduate students with little to no experience with publishing, Belcher also states that even senior professors have been able to benefit from following it. However, there is never mention of its applicability to undergraduates or recent graduates preparing for graduate studies. In this book review, the content and organization of the guide will be summarized, followed by a discussion of the ways in which the guide is and is not appropriate for use among undergraduates and those preparing for graduate studies. Further, minor suggestions regarding structure and level of detail will be made.

In the first chapter, the reader is given general instructions of how to best make use of the writing guide. These instructions are broken down based on temperament of the writer, their discipline, their career stage, and whether or not the workbook will be used individually, with coauthors, or a writing group, giving each reader the ability to choose their own path. Over the next 12 chapters, writers are walked through every stage of producing a publishable article, from deciding which paper to focus energy on, to revising it, to submitting it, to responding to journal decisions. More specifically, the chapter topics include: designing your plan for writing; starting your article; advancing your argument; selecting a journal; reviewing the related literature; strengthening your structure; presenting your evidence; opening and concluding your article; giving, getting, and using others' feedback; editing your sentences, wrapping up your article; sending your article; and finally, responding to journal decisions.

While the general flow of the topics made sense to this reader, there were some minor structural issues within the chapters which made following along at times difficult. Specifically, the task calendar for each week should be introduced at the beginning of the chapter and revisited at the end so that goals are made and refreshed throughout the week, rather than being left to the end of the chapter. Further, due to the brief, yet knowledgeable and specific advice provided for the array of disciplines touched upon in this workbook, one could argue that each discipline that this book applies to warrants its own individual edition so that the reader could be given more specific examples based on their field.

To comment specifically on the book's applicability to undergraduate students and those preparing for graduate studies, the workbook does indeed provide valuable guidance when it comes to the revision, and particularly the submission processes. As a student who recently received their B.A. honours in psychology, this workbook is full of valuable guidelines and procedural explanations that were never made explicit during my undergraduate career, such as how to pick which journal to submit to and how to concisely give feedback to other people's writing. The author also provides valuable information regarding why journals typically reject articles, as well as brief reviews as to the different kinds of academic articles.

While providing valuable information to the novice reader, the general tone of the workbook, as set by the reoccurring use of strong language, is fairly discouraging to those with little to no experience with publishing. For example, the author touches on 28 anxieties, pitfalls, and traps that may cause even the most seasoned of professionals to hit a writing dry spell. While several of the obstacles listed appear easily managed and are well worth mentioning and addressing, such as "I write so slowly that I never seem to get much done", some, such as "I am too depressed to write" and "my childcare responsibilities are preventing me from writing" do not belong in the same category. By listing them as

such, novice researchers may be given the impression that academic communities are impersonal and inflexible, dissuading them from engaging in one altogether.

In addition, the final chapter on responding to journal decisions may leave the young reader with more questions than answers. In fact, at times it seems as though the author is equally as perplexed by the indirect and puzzling language used in responses from journals. While, as is the rest of the book, this section is fairly informative, the reader would greatly benefit from a critical engagement with the academic publishing process that the author seems simultaneously confused by but resigned to. While pointing out that the publication process is a long, and at time confusing process, the author never delves into why things might be the way that they are. As a person who is wishing to pursue academia further, I would have benefitted from an opening of a dialogue around the structure of academia as much as I did learning the technical procedures one must engage in to succeed in it.

Overall, I do feel that undergraduates and those preparing for graduate studies can benefit as much, if not even more than graduate students, as graduate students have often forged relationships with supervisors and other mentoring figures who would likely be able to provide them with this information. While the structure could be improved in places, and a critical engagement with the process of publication is lacking, this book does provide the reader with a wealth of valuable information regarding the publishing process. After reading "Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success" by Wendy Laura Belcher, I feel like less of an outsider looking in on the process of academic publishing as these things are rarely explicitly stated, leaving novice researchers who would like to pursue the publication of a course paper or thesis project lost.