

# EAYE



**The European Association of Young Economists presents<sup>1</sup>**

## **How to survive in the publishing game?**

### **Tips for young economists**

Are young economists at a disadvantage when they submit a paper? Recent evidence suggests that there is no significant publication bias against young economists (Card and DellaVigna 2017). On the opposite, editors claim that if a paper by a young economist is at the margin they would personally rather give it a second shot. However, they also observe that young economists do a bad job in writing papers.

Here is what editors recommend you should do to increase your chances of being published:

**1. High quality is a necessary contribution (but not a sufficient one)**

All the tips below apply conditional on that you have a high quality paper. Make sure that you are working on a novel idea and work hard on the analysis and results. There is no trade-off between a high quality analysis and writing.

**2. Pitch your contribution**

The main problem is that the key fundamental contribution of young economists' papers is often not clear from the abstract and introduction. The editors acknowledge that it is difficult to identify the key contribution. Think hard about what the main contribution is, what to include, how to structure the ideas; maybe put the paper on the side for a month or two before starting again. Get colleagues to read the paper, present your work a lot (in seminars, office hours of visitors and conferences). Learn what people like about the paper and what they don't understand. Scanning through the paper should tell the story. A related literature section is not a good way to understand the contribution, it might even be useless.

**3. Polish your paper**

Young economists submit their papers too early when they are not yet polished. Work longer on the paper. Don't present early versions if editors might be in the audience, they might remember your presentation and reject the work based on their first impression. Have a native speaker go through the paper before submission – the cost of professional services is marginal in relation to the total costs of your research.

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<sup>1</sup> This document is a free transcript of a panel discussion on “How to Survive in the Publishing Game: Strategies for Young Economists” held at the EEA 2017 in Lisbon. We are thankful for Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln (Review of Economic Studies), Magne Mogstad (Journal of Political Economy), Imran Rasul (Journal of the European Economic Association) and Jan-Egbert Sturm (European Journal of Political Economy) for their more-than-active participation and abundant comments.

#### **4. Know your editor**

Editors are essential in decisions about your paper, even more important than referees. Make sure that you know what the editor is working on and if the manuscript is of importance to him or her. Try to understand who is in the network of the editor and what might be in their interest because referees are often selected from the editor's network. Also, think at every step how the editors' life can be made as easy as possible. For example, she or he needs to see as quick as possible what your contribution is.

#### **5. Know your journal**

Choose a journal with a focus that matches the key contribution of your paper. Make sure that the journal still has this focus (see point 4.). Write the paper such that it matches the journal where you would like to publish. If your paper continually gets rejected at top journals, be prepared to drop down a tier rather than continually wasting time at too high a level.

#### **6. Ask editors if you have questions about a decision**

If you receive a revise and resubmit, and you don't understand what referees mean or referees' comments are conflicting ask the editor what you should do. Your problems should be objective – discuss them with your colleagues first. If you decide to contact editors, make sure that you ask them immediately after the decision has been made, when they still remember your paper. Don't expect that editors will change their opinion on a decision.

#### **7. R&R should be top priority**

If you get an R&R at a journal, make this your top priority. An R&R dramatically increases your chances of publication. Make sure you don't miss the chance (and deadline) and resubmit the paper as early as possible. Early resubmission ensures that reviewers will still remember your paper, and decreases the probability that the editor has to find new reviewers. Answer very politely and address every point. Write your revision reports such that the editor and reviewers have an easy time: copy/paste all comments, and provide a short summary of how and where you addressed them. You don't need to overload your paper with additional results, only provide the most important ones and offer readers additional material in the appendix or on request. However, in the revision report new results should all be well explained.

#### **8. Take rejections seriously**

Every rejection is a revise and resubmit without the time pressure. Even if you don't like a comment ask yourself if it could have been your fault and if you presented the result in a bad way. Take the rejection seriously and make an effort to improve the paper. Think on what you can learn from the comments. Even at another journal, don't resubmit without either the suggested changes or a discussion of them (if the comment is at least slightly obvious) because you might get the same referees again. If the editor kindly suggests another journal you should consider his or her advice.

#### **9. Work on the ideas that interest you**

Work on the ideas that interest you and don't worry about narrowness. Be more selective in the idea selection, try your ideas and dismiss those that don't work out as early as possible. Don't worry too much about hot topics.

#### **10. Stop strategizing and work hard**

(Young) economists spend too much time strategizing. If you care to strategize, focus on the obvious: what is your paper about, which journal is a good fit, and which editor likes your kind of work?

## **References**

Card, David, and Stefano DellaVigna (2017). What do Editors Maximize? Evidence from Four Leading Economics Journals, NBER Working Paper 23282.