

Getting published

Schinke, Robert J; Mellalieu, Stephen ; Ntoumanis, Nikos; Kavussanu, Maria; Standage, Martyn; Strauss, Bernd; papaioannou, Athanasios

DOI:

[10.1080/10413200.2020.1741725](https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2020.1741725)

License:

Other (please specify with Rights Statement)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Schinke, RJ, Mellalieu, S, Ntoumanis, N, Kavussanu, M, Standage, M, Strauss, B & papaioannou, A 2020, 'Getting published: suggestions and strategies from editors of sport and exercise psychology journals', *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2020.1741725>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Applied Sport Psychology on 11/03/2020, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10413200.2020.1741725>

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

**Getting Published: Suggestions and Strategies from Editors of Sport and Exercise
Psychology Journals**

Robert J. Schinke¹, Stephen Mellalieu², Nikos Ntoumanis³, Maria Kavussanu⁴, Martyn
Standage⁵, Bernd Strauss⁶, and Athanasios Papaioannou⁷

¹School of Human Kinetics, Laurentian University, Canada

²Cardiff School of Sport & Health Sciences, Cardiff Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

³Physical Activity and Well-Being Group, School of Psychology, Curtin University, Perth,
Western Australia

⁴School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham, United
Kingdom

⁵Centre for Motivation and Health Behaviour Change, Department for Health, University of
Bath, United Kingdom

⁶Institute of Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Muenster, Germany

⁷School of Physical Education, Sport & Dietetics, University of Thessaly, Trikala, Greece

Author Note

Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Robert J. Schinke, School of
Human Kinetics, B-241 Ben Avery Building, Laurentian University, 935 Ramsey Lake Rd.,
Sudbury, Canada, P3E-2C6. E-mail: rschinke@laurentian.ca

**Getting Published: Suggestions and Strategies from Editors of Sport and Exercise
Psychology Journals**

Abstract

Publishing in peer review journals is an acquired skill that almost any scholar – practitioner can achieve through a systematic approach and practice. The authors of this manuscript are experienced editors from five leading international sport and exercise psychology peer-review journals. Within this manuscript, the contributing authors considered how one could effectively proceed in the authoring process from the point of conceptualization onward to manuscript acceptance. Particular focus has been placed on journal requirements, useful content suggestions in relation to all components of a manuscript, and the revision process. A final summation is provided with key takeaway points. The intention is to further author understanding and effective authoring pathways in relation to academic publishing in any sport and exercise psychology-focused journal.

Keywords: sport and exercise psychology, peer review, journal editors, publishing strategies, successful authoring

Getting Published: Suggestions and Strategies from Editors of Sport and Exercise Psychology Journals

Authoring in high quality journals is never easy; frequent manuscript rejections can lead to frustration, misdirected efforts, apathy, and in some instances, the lowering of authors' expectations and career trajectories. In our positions with editorial responsibilities of international societies' flagship peer-reviewed outlets (Mellalieu, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*; Ntoumanis and Strauss, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*; Standage, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*; Kavussanu, *Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology*; and Schinke and Papaioannou, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*) we have found that patterns exist in terms of common pitfalls in the publication process. Consequently, we see part of our responsibility, beyond evaluating manuscripts in partnership with section/associate editors and reviewers, to offer capacity building skills to authors, and through this process, support the articulation of knowledge-expanding ideas relating to sport and exercise psychology. This authoring guide is our attempt at capacity building for researchers, and so, we wish to share helpful hints. Our intention is to demystify the submission process and why certain manuscripts are successful, whereas others tend to fall short, leading to challenging revision processes and in some cases, rejections. What follows below are solution-focused ideas, derived from our vantage as scholars with several decades of experience as practitioners, authors of manuscripts in multiple outlets, and as editors, associate editors, editorial board members, and/or reviewers of a plethora of journals. Unless stated otherwise, our suggestions are generic and should apply to all journals with a sport and exercise psychology focus, not just the journals we currently serve.

To begin, we devote a brief section to good scholarship and the importance of study design and conceptualization. Next, we discuss the need to consider the requirements of the intended journal of publication outlet. When focusing on journal requirements, the reader will

find that several expectations are shared across the journals, whereas others are specific to a journal's mission, and possibly, the philosophical orientation of the society it represents. We then discuss publication ethics and the challenges of piecemeal publications. A consideration of each of the components found within a manuscript is then offered, providing brief guidelines of what should be included within each component. We then proceed to examine the revision process, and offer suggestions of how to effectively address reviewer comments and develop stronger iterations of the manuscript. Finally, we conclude our guide with summary points intended as key takeaways for authors.

First Principles - Study Design and Conceptualization

Sound scholarship begins with the conceptualization of a project idea. We cannot emphasize enough the fundamental importance of developing research questions that make original contributions to the extant 'academic' literature. Indeed, further to advancing our knowledge of key psychological processes, it is also important to pose research questions that are rich in practical utility, issues to which the findings have direct benefit to key groups such as athletes, coaches, and/or sport or physical activity-related stakeholders. Here, the coproduction of knowledge can also contribute to maximizing the practical relevance and impact of the work via direct engagement with the intended beneficiaries.

After generating a meaningful research question, the next step is designing and conceptualizing the work. Here, authors must "get the basics right" by choosing an appropriate and rigorous study design, be it quantitative or qualitative. Indeed, it is the research design that provides the logical structure by which to either (a) test the study aims, objectives, and/or specific hypotheses when spoken of in relation to quantitative research; or (b) richly explore a research question through the use of a well-designed study, with correct alignment from ontology, through a research tradition, onward to the implementation of a well-executed methodology.

A key element of the construction of a robust research design is the sampling process. In the case of quantitative research, Authors should undertake a priori power analysis to calculate appropriate sample sizes required. Too small sample sizes do not allow sufficient statistical power and can lead to relevant misinterpretations and lack of reproducibility of the found result pattern (see Cohen, 2013 for a detailed discussion). For qualitative research, selection of appropriate sampling procedures will allow the Author to effectively gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon it is that they are studying (Patton, 2014).

Journal Requirements

Amongst the most critical first decisions for publishing is the selection of an appropriate journal for an author's manuscript. The encounters have been plentiful where authors from outside of the scope of sport and exercise psychology topics (e.g., physiology, sports medicine, biomechanics, sport pedagogy, sport sociology) have submitted their manuscripts to the journals we represent. Consequently, we have concluded that on occasion authors do not read their intended journal's mission and journal requirements in their haste toward submission. Although we often direct the author to a more suitable peer-review outlet, such practice leads to time being wasted on both the editor's and the author's part.

Most submissions we receive are within the scope of the intended outlet; and these are manuscripts we now turn our attention to. There are common standards across the journals we represent, and so, selecting the journal that best fits with your manuscript requires some advanced scouting. Each journal has its own distinct mission; a journal might be more heavily weighted toward scientific discovery and empirical studies, with less expectation of practical knowledge translation due to its targeted readership of scientists. Another journal might be focused almost exclusively on practice, with a strong emphasis on application given its intended readership of clinicians and mental performance consultants who work full-time in the field, seeking to stay current on emerging practical interventions. There are also journals that bridge

research and practice to varying degrees. The author's task is to determine the journal that best fits one's submission, or alternately, closely align, or realign, one's manuscript with the intended journal. As one of our authors wrote when we compiled our material in advance of writing: "read the label closely".

For example, the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* is focused mostly on research studies and reviews of literature, while seeking a richly developed practical section toward the latter pages of the manuscript. Contrastingly, in the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* the expectation is that the author's writing exceeds the integration of an applied section found near the end of the manuscript, to a more immersive engagement with practicality throughout the entire manuscript. Each journal has its nuances in what is expected from a submission, and these expectations are slightly fluid, dependent on a dialog that ensues during an editorial term between the journal editor and the society (and/or publisher) that oversees the flagship journal. Once a journal has been identified, a combination of reading the journal mission, its requirements via its submission guidelines, and recently accepted manuscripts online, provides rich information regarding if and how to proceed with one's submission. Inquisitiveness serves the author well, whereas a lack of knowledge regarding the journal's preferences leaves the author either with a sense of uncertainty upon submission, or alternately, a surprising, though foreseeable, outcome in hindsight (assuming the author is reflective post-outcome).

Publication Ethics

Although not new to the scientific literature (e.g., see Susser & Yankauer, 1993), as editors, we receive numerous submissions that include statements that refer the reader to an existing paper that outlines the methods used in the submitted manuscript (i.e., as part of a larger study). If considering a 'piecemeal approach', authors must inform the editor in a cover letter on the submission of the paper and include the manuscripts that are based on the same

data/sample/work (either ‘published’, ‘in press’, or ‘in submission’). Failure to include such information is not excusable. The submission of such manuscripts can cause trouble for numerous reasons, including lacking in originality and being misleading in terms of a reported effect, especially if leading to erroneous conclusions in related meta-analyses by being presented as independent contributions. Related to a piecemeal approach or data slicing, we would encourage authors to consider whether the scientific contribution of their manuscript would be better served by integrating the data into one larger submission, or whether it is considered necessary and desirable to publish separate manuscripts. A fundamental consideration here is what are the specific aspects of the science that make it necessary and desirable to present the data as multiple manuscripts? For the most part, it is clear that authors would be prudent to expend their efforts on more meaningful, original contributions – both for their own academic development, but also for the advancement of sport and exercise psychology.

Manuscript Components

The structure we present in this section is focused on the breadth of components found in manuscript submissions. We do recognize that submissions in the forms of reviews of literature or practical manuscripts will include some, but not all of the components discussed below. However, empirical research studies will include most if not all of the sections we have considered; as such we are seeking to be expansive. Depending on the type of manuscript you are presently working on, you might find more pertinence in specific sub-sections. We first begin with a section devoted to the Introduction and Review of Literature, and then we structure our sections chronologically, moving onward to the Method, Results, Discussion (though Results and Discussion content can be combined into a single section in qualitative research), Practical Applications, and Conclusions.

Irrespective of the format, a good manuscript should fundamentally tell a story (a good one at that!). The best stories are logical, concise and well structured - with a beginning, a

middle, and an end. The reader should be able to follow the story, even if the reader is not an expert in the chosen topic area.

Introduction and Review of Literature

The first section of the main part of a manuscript is the Introduction (note that in the 7th edition of the APA Publication Manual, 2019, this section has no heading, only that of the title of the manuscript). The aim in this section is to introduce the reader to the topic under investigation, to review pertinent past literature, and to clearly state the manuscript's aims and objectives and, where appropriate, outline the study hypotheses (quantitative) or research question(s) (qualitative). Although there are no rules regarding the length of this section, for most published papers in sport and exercise psychology journals, an introduction and review of literature is the longest or second longest section of a manuscript. The reason for such length is probably because authors use this section as they seek to convince readers that their study makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature on the topic under investigation. A number of key issues need to be addressed in the Introduction; within this section we elaborate on pertinent guidelines from the Journal Article Reporting Standards for studies that report new quantitative (JARS-Quant), qualitative (JARS-Qual), and mixed methods research (cf. Appelbaum, Cooper, Kline, Mayo-Wilson, Nezu, & Rao, 2018; Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson, & Suárez-Orozco, 2018). We also draw from our experiences of authoring and reviewing manuscripts.

We suggest that the opening paragraph of a manuscript succinctly describes the significance of the issue(s) under investigation. Relevant statistics and reference to policy documents could help strengthen one's case, regardless of one's methodological preference. For example, many articles in the exercise/physical activity psychology literature start by describing levels of physical inactivity at a national or global level, and present information as to the health implications of physical inactivity. Such information does not need to be unpacked in any great detail, particularly if the issue (e.g., physical inactivity) is well-known to the readers of the

journal (although the authors should acknowledge that some readers will be new to the topic area). We also suggest that at the end of the opening paragraph, the authors explain, in non-technical terms, how the manuscript contributes to the understanding of the described issue, conceptually, methodologically and/or from an applied perspective.

In the paragraphs and pages that follow, the authors need to identify pertinent literature and explain how their study builds upon and extends such literature. The Introduction of an empirical paper is not a section where one needs to exhaustively summarize “everything” that one knows about a topic. An exhaustive examination of a topic would be more appropriate for a review paper. Rather, the purpose of the Introduction section in relation to an empirical study is to present the reader to the literature that is most pertinent in relation to the manuscript. Although what is a pertinent study should be decided on a case-by-case basis, a useful guide is that the included studies had limitations that are directly addressed, or had objectives that are replicated or extended, by the manuscript. If there has already been a lot of research on the specific topic, the included studies should ideally come from samples or research participants that share similar characteristics to the manuscript’s sample, unless the purpose of the manuscript is to test the generalizability of previous findings with different population groups.

It is often perceived that the included literature should be recent, however, older literature, such as parent literature that serves as a historical context to the project, could be included, where appropriate. For instance, authors might want to make the point that specific issues have been discussed for decades or might want to highlight “classic” (agenda-setting) papers. As a general rule of thumb, the richer the literature on a topic, the narrower the selection of pertinent studies should be, so that it is clear to the reader what gaps in knowledge are addressed in the manuscript. Although it is tempting to include a lot of the author’s previous work in the Introduction section, and most often this would be appropriate if the author has pertinent studies on the topic, self-citing should be exercised with caution. This is particularly the

case if there is also research by other researchers on the topic, to avoid giving the impression that the authors have a narrow knowledge of the topic, or that they are promoting and privileging their own scholarship. Nevertheless, as noted in the previous section, it is imperative to include the author's previous work when findings from the same data set have been published previously, to avoid raising ethical issues.

In terms of writing style, a good Introduction section "sells the manuscript" to the reader, by explaining its added value to the knowledge database. The contributions could be summarized at the end of the section or could be interspersed throughout the Introduction (or both); in either case they should be made obvious, especially to busy reviewers and/or editorial teams. When describing their contributions, it is imperative that authors stay with facts, do not "cherry-pick" evidence, and do not overstate the contributions of the manuscript. To the extent possible, authors should avoid relying on secondary sources. Although it is tempting to paraphrase the account of a study which is described in the Introduction of another study, such a description can be misleading (intentionally or not). For qualitative investigations it is also recommended that the approach to enquiry (e.g., interpretative, post-positivist) is clarified, if it helps to explain the objectives and the rationale for the study (Levitt et al., 2018).

Having reviewed the pertinent literature and explained relevant technical terms, the authors should conclude the Introduction by reiterating again the purpose of their study, but unlike the opening paragraph, this time the aim(s) and objectives should be specific and conveyed using technical language (e.g., in terms of concepts and/or methodology). For quantitative papers, in the final paragraph(s) of the Introduction the study purposes and hypotheses (quantitative) or research question(s) (qualitative) should be put forward, ideally numbered, so that they can be referred to in latter parts of the manuscript. The rationale for each hypothesis/research question should be obvious from the review of the pertinent literature (and relevant references need to be cited), although a very brief explanation would be beneficial. It is

also possible to intersperse the hypotheses/research questions throughout the Introduction; in such a case their numbering is highly recommended. Relating to quantitative research, hypotheses should be ideally pre-registered as part of a Stage 1 Registered Report in a recognized repository (e.g., Open Science Framework; <https://osf.io>) and could be confirmatory (e.g., data independent) or exploratory (e.g., data dependent; Nosek, Ebersole, DeHaven, & Mellor, 2018). Within qualitative papers, as intimated above, hypotheses are not typical, though exceptions do exist in some post-positive projects. However, in most cases, qualitative research tends to be exploratory, with its focus placed on quality, in terms of well-defined research questions, richness and interpretation (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011).

Method

The Method section¹ of the paper is where authors should specify and describe the research design that has been used in their work. A particularly useful resource in this regard is the already mentioned APA's Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS; cf. Appelbaum Cooper et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2018), which can help editors and authors to provide clearer, more accurate, and transparent papers. There are also modules outlined in the JARS papers to guide authors on the presentation of specific designs including the reporting of N-of-1 designs, replications, clinical trials, longitudinal studies and observational studies, as well as the analytic methods of structural equation modeling and Bayesian analyses.

When presenting their research design, authors should be careful not to confuse their approach to design with their chosen methodology or analyses. For example, cross-sectional designs are often equated with the methodology of using questionnaires. Within qualitative research, the types of methods, again, must align with the broader methodology (the terms methodology and method should not be conflated - methodology refers to how a study is conducted, while method refers to the tools or techniques utilised). For example, a decolonizing

¹ In qualitative research this section is often termed 'methodology'

methodology situated within community based forms of research might include community meetings, stakeholder interviews, and various forms of artefacts and arts-based methods (see Blodgett, Coholic, Schinke, McGannon, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014). Clear distinctions should be made in terms of how one systematically brings together a methodology so as not to conflate terminology.

As outlined in the APA Manual (2019; Version 7), the presentation of the research design text should also inform readers of key issues such as in relation to quantitative research, sample size (including power analysis calculation undertaken), whether an experimental manipulation was used, whether the work was conducted with different groups or a within-subjects design, whether the participants were randomly assigned to conditions, or whether the participants were observed naturalistically. Key information related to the independent and dependent variables should also be included. Parallel forms of transparency are required within qualitative methodologies. Each qualitative methodology should be built and then expressed logically to the reviewer and readership, step by step, following *a priori* or emergent, contextually derived logic. The reasoning behind the selection of methods as parts of a richly constructed qualitative methodology reveals nuances that inform how the richly constructed results were derived. Essentially, the research design should be presented concisely, yet with enough detail that another researcher could replicate the work, and in the case of qualitative research, draw upon how one or more methods might be taken up in one's own research design.

Results

The Results section is where authors present the findings. The results should be presented in full, regardless of whether these support or undermine *a priori* assumptions. They should be easy to understand, as concise as possible, and presented in a logical order, such as to tell a story in relation to what was found. There are two general streams of result presentation that can broadly be classified into quantitative and qualitative, though it should be recognized that mixed

method approaches blend these two general streams into a broader data presentation (see Creswell & Clark, 2017). What follows are our collective views of what might constitute a strong Results section. We present information relevant to quantitative research first, followed by qualitative research.

Quantitative Research. The primary starting point for a quantitative Results section is to ensure consistency with its preceding Introduction section. The Results section should therefore follow logically from the statement of the research questions/hypotheses. The order and layout of the presentation of the results itself should also follow a consistent sequence, be it theoretical, temporal, or otherwise. Sufficient data should be presented and derived from an appropriate sample size or participant number, based on one's research question and methodological approach adopted. Information should also be provided that informs the reader as to why certain decisions regarding the treatment of data have been undertaken (e.g., handling missing data, assumptions of parametric testing).

In keeping with the view that the widespread use of 'statistical significance' as a license for making a claim of a scientific finding leads to considerable distortion of the scientific process (see McShane, Gal, Gelman, Robert, & Tackett, 2019; for a recent commentary), authors should present the results of both significant and non-significant findings, and focus on reporting information that indicates the size of any effect(s). The reporting of effect sizes and their confidence intervals (CIs) has been periodically recommended as the primary solution to concerns regarding the overemphasis on significance testing (see Pek & Flora, 2018). Indeed, the seventh edition of the APA (APA, 2019) Publication Manual advises a complete report of all of the supported hypotheses, effect size estimates and their confidence intervals as minimum expectations for all APA journals. Effect sizes should be presented that directly answer their motivating research questions, be comprehensible to the average reader, and be based on meaningful metrics of their constituent variables. Where manuscripts report small sample sizes

and large effect sizes, the authors should address this, for example, considering the recommendations by Schweizer and Furley (2016).

The results need to be presented clearly and in relation to the purposes the study aims to address (note their interpretation should be reserved for the discussion section only). The author(s) should be clear how each analysis is linked to each hypothesis, illuminating how the analysis employed allows the conclusion to be drawn. As it is assumed that the reader will possess some knowledge of statistics, authors should only explain how or why a particular test is used, if it is unusual or novel. Lastly, while inclusion of both text and tables/figures in quantitative Results sections makes it easier for readers to readily review the study results, authors should not replicate information in the text and in tables/figures. The key features in the table/figure should, however, be explained in the narrative which will help interpretation. A common error is to tell nothing about the table or figure in the text, or to tell in writing everything in the table or figure. In sum, results, like the rest of the manuscript, need to be presented concisely.

Qualitative Research. There are many traditions of qualitative research, and these traditions continue to expand rapidly. The presentation of qualitative results would look very different if the methodology was a form of thematic analysis, grounded theory, narrative, discourse analysis, or a culturally-infused decolonizing methodology (of note, there is a much wider choice of qualitative methodologies we have not listed). Regardless of the chosen methodology, there are several key markers of a strong quality Results section. The presentation of the results (like the entire manuscript) is meant to tell a story, which is logical, has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and the reader should be able to follow, even if not an expert in the topic. Though not always applicable, headings and subheadings might help guide both the author and the reader in terms of the sequencing of ideas and how these ideas bridge, or move, from one to the next. Also relating to the most general presentation of qualitative results, ideas should be

presented and defined before the author delves into unpacking the data. Following logically, when data are unpacked, the logic can be presented, at either a descriptive or interpretational level. Descriptive level presentations, assuming one can follow the sequencing of ideas from beginning to end, are perfectly acceptable, and the descriptions should be vivid and rich, so as to pull the reader into the data. Interpretational level results move beyond description. Where descriptive data might have answers embedded relating to the questions of “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, and “how”; interpretive level presentations include possibilities as to “the why”, from the vantage of the author. These interpretations, just as the descriptions that precede them, are as much about the interpreter as the participants, whose words are often being recast (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

The story told, should also align with the methodology chosen, and the philosophical underpinnings upon which it is founded. For example, if one were to present the results with a post-positive grounded theory tradition, the language should be presented as a form of local truth, given the ontological assumption of realism. Hence, terms such as “found” and “emerged from the data” are quite acceptable in relation the aforementioned methodological approach. Each methodological approach comes with its own style of writing, or storying. Drawing upon a second example, community based research (CBR), is meant to centralize the voice(s) of community members and university scholar(s) voices within the authoring process, often in dialog. CBR can vary in ontological positioning, however, emphasis must be placed on local capacity building and practical legacies, beyond scholarly output (see Schinke, Middleton, Petersen, Kao, Lefebvre, & Habra, 2019). Though some research has been published with forms of misalignment found in the Results section, presentations that are inconsistent from the methodology to the storying create unnecessary tensions. Moreover, these examples of data delivery create confusion for young and less experienced qualitative researchers, taking up an unfamiliar methodology. The consequence of published qualitative projects where there are

misalignments can result in the perpetuation of incorrectly executed projects, from one researcher to another, with incorrect practices becoming normalized.

Discussion

The aim of the Discussion section is to critically interpret the manuscript's findings in relation to existing work (theory, and/or practice), bearing in mind the strengths and limitations of the study. This section also provides the authors with scope to discuss applied and/or policy-related implications stemming from the study, as well as to provide recommendations for future research and/or practice. We suggest that the opening paragraph briefly reminds the reader of the study aims and objectives and then subsequent paragraphs discuss the study findings in relation to the literature and the study purposes. Specifically, each hypothesis or research question (if put forward in the Introduction) should be discussed in detail, explaining the extent to which data analysis provided support for it. Distinction should be made between confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses. Past literature could be discussed (potentially including literature that was not covered in the Introduction section), if it sheds light as to why a hypothesis or research question was (or was not) supported, and readers should be informed how the manuscript's findings replicate, dispute, or extend past findings. Plausible alternative explanations for the findings, with regard to theory, methodology, or analysis, should be highlighted. Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, it might not be possible to provide explanations for the observed findings based on theory or past research. In such cases, speculations are legitimate, particularly if there is a plausible rationale behind them, but the reader should be clearly informed that these are speculations.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

After discussing all their findings, authors should summarize the major strengths and limitations of their work, with reference to (where relevant) conceptual development or refinement, methodology, and relevance for practice and policy. It is important that

exaggerations are avoided (e.g., for quantitative manuscripts, it is important to consider sources of potential bias, adequacy of sample size, strengths of the research design; for both qualitative and quantitative manuscripts, one must avoid overstating one's results or their practical application as generalizable) so as not to mislead readers or give them the impression that the authors are naïve. Authors should be honest about the limitations of their work; some well-known limitations do not need detailed discussion. For instance, most readers are familiar with the limitations of cross-sectional designs, hence, if word count is tight, authors could simply mention the cross-sectional design as being a limitation of their work, without delving further into this, or they can provide a reference to work where such limitations are discussed in detail.

Embedded in outlining the major strengths and limitations of their work, we also suggest that authors provide a small number of recommendations for future research. Such avenues for future research can draw directly or indirectly from the manuscript's findings or limitations; authors are advised to explain why such future avenues for research are important (e.g., in quantitative research, what would the value be to replicate the study with different outcome measures, experimental manipulations, or to recruit a sample with different demographic characteristics; in qualitative research, one might consider how one might extend a methodology or use the methodology in a novel setting).

Practical Applications

The Practice/Application section should be used to discuss how the findings of the manuscript contribute new insights and consequences for practice within the field. As a profession, practice is a central tenet of the discipline of sport and exercise psychology, any subsequent discussion of application arising must therefore extend beyond the mere promise of practice in the future to clear concrete suggestions of how one might adopt this knowledge in the applied field itself. Manuscripts rejected or referred for revision and resubmission on the basis of deficiency in this aspect typically give insufficient consideration to discussing the practical

implications arising from the work, failing to directly ground practice recommendations in the findings of the research, which is particularly important for journals of applied focus. The practical element of a manuscript should therefore seek to move beyond universal suggestions for practice to indications of how one might tweak the practical approach so that it matches with the context(s) of the study. Here, authors should adopt a ‘fine-grained’ approach to inform the reader not only ‘what’ the implications are and ‘how’ they are grounded in the knowledge generated, but also ‘where’ such knowledge may be utilised.

In seeking to provide meaningful guidelines or recommendations arising from their work, if relevant, authors should aim to propose tangible interventions for practice adoption, with the extent of the depth of unpacking contingent on the journal one submits to. A common frustration within the academic sport and exercise psychology field is the lack of rigorous intervention research (lab or field based) designs. Notwithstanding that high quality interventions studies are difficult to conduct, a telling contribution to the sparsity of such work is the fact that the practice/application knowledge generated from nonexperimental research too often lacks sufficient detail for researchers to utilise in order to subsequently design sufficiently robust intervention research.

Conclusion

The Conclusion section is a form of summary, or synthesis, derived from the project. There are meant to be clear takeaways from the project, and these need to be highlighted, in order to reinforce one’s message. These “conclusions” should be drawn directly from the study’s findings, logically, and articulate the most important lessons and insights. Conclusions are also meant to be concise, meaning that they should be short and powerful, emphasizing what the reader should readily extract from the project. This is the author’s final opportunity to leave a lasting impression, one that might strengthen one’s argument that the submission should proceed to revision or, in some cases, outright acceptance.

Revising and Re-submitting to Acceptance

Authors who develop well conceptualized, logical, aligned, and well worded studies that adhere to the journal's mission are often asked to revise and resubmit (R & R) their manuscripts. Embedded in the response, the editor is suggesting there is potential in the manuscript, even if one of the reviewers may have recommended rejection. Receiving a R & R decision presents the opportunity to persuade the editor and the reviewers that the manuscript is worthy, upon refinement, of publication. A R & R decision is also an opportunity to strengthen the manuscript before it reaches a wider audience. Ultimately, the intention through the revision process is to further the quality of how the research project or review of literature is presented. In this section, we share our collective views on how to revise a manuscript to increase its chances of acceptance.

The first step is to ensure that the author(s) fully understand the reviewers' comments and prepare a strategy to address these comments. During this initial stage in the revision process, the author should carefully ponder the issues at hand. Have the reviewers fully appreciated the manuscript? Are there misunderstandings that need to be corrected, resulting either from how the project was written or a lack of information embedded in a given section? Then, at a functional level, one might consider what new insights the reviewers have provided that are worth addressing. We propose that as an author, one would benefit from reading the manuscript review comments carefully and discuss these with your co-authors to ensure you have a clear understanding of all issues. Then, develop a strategy of how to address each and every comment. Bear in mind that you do not have to make every single change the reviewers have requested. The ultimate goal should be to produce a manuscript that is worthy of publication and can make a significant contribution to the literature, and this goal needs to be kept in mind while developing a strategy of how to address the reviewers' comments; pay particular attention to new insights that can strengthen the manuscript.

The second step is to prepare the response to the reviewers' and acting editor comments. The response sheet is a very important document that can make the difference between rejection and acceptance, or alternately, the possibility of a further R & R invitation, which in turn, will further augment the manuscript's quality. The response sheet needs to be well organized and presented and include the reviewers' (and editor's) comments, as well as your explanations of how and where you have made the requested changes. At this stage, the revision of the manuscript can start, in an effort to make as many changes as possible to address as many comments as possible. In your response document, clearly indicate where in the manuscript the requested changes have been made, by providing page and line numbers and highlighting all changes to help the editor and reviewers easily locate these changes. Not every single change requested by the reviewers needs to be made, but there is a need to respond to all comments.

There will be instances that you do not agree with a comment made by the reviewer or it may be that the reviewer has misunderstood aspects of your study. In these instances, the best strategy is to provide a convincing argument/explanation for your decision to not make the requested changes. For example, if you feel that your adopted approach, such as your choice to situate the work by citing one strand of scholarship instead of another, is better than the one the reviewer suggests, you need to explain this, substantiating your response with evidence. If there is a misunderstanding of the issue by the reviewer, you need to clarify the misunderstanding, and if you cannot substantiate your decision, engage in reflection, and then opt toward the reviewer's suggestion. Keep your response to each comment concise, and refrain from providing space limitations as a justification for the decision to not make the change or ignore reviewer comments. Both are risky practices that can lead to rejection.

In other instances, the comments will be difficult to address, or involve a lot of work, possibly a suggestion to re-analyze the data or re-write large sections of the manuscript. Often, these are the best comments because by addressing them, the manuscript is considerably

improved. You need to clearly show that you have made an effort to address all difficult comments. This may require a complete re-write (and it may also need an extension), but what you will discover is that your manuscript will be much stronger after implementing the requested changes. Reviewers have given you a great opportunity to improve your manuscript before it reaches a wider audience. Capitalize on this opportunity by making the suggested changes as other readers will have similar questions when your manuscript is eventually published.

As a result of the revision process, the manuscript flow and logic are likely to be affected. Prior to resubmitting your manuscript, be sure to read the entire manuscript carefully and revise as needed (informing the editor of all major changes resulting from your engagement with the feedback). Keep in mind that your goal is to produce a manuscript that can make a substantive contribution to the literature, that readers will find interesting and easy to understand, and so, use your judgment to ensure the final product fits well together.

Conclusion

We have proposed considerations for academic authorship in the field of sport and exercise psychology. These guidelines were provided temporally from the point of project conceptualization through to submission, revision, and eventual acceptance. The proposed suggestions are intended to develop author capacity, though also, introspection and insight in terms of one's authoring practices. Arguably, there are further ideas in terms of how one might develop and augment one's writing for peer review. This manuscript is intended as a valuable resource, offering selective insight regarding how to work effectively within the peer review process. Arguably, further authors would have provided additional insights, given their editorial experiences and journal foci. What can be taken in broadest summation is that authoring is a skill set that can be understood and effectively undertaken by almost every scholar, given the correct knowledge of logical authoring. These processes are meant to be transparent and finally, for the

benefit of this field, to spur vibrant dialog and advancements in methodological, thematic, and practical knowledge.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Appelbaum, M., Cooper, H., Kline, R. B., Mayo-Wilson, E., Nezu, A. M., & Rao, S. M. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for quantitative research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist*, 73, 3-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000191>
- Blodgett, A. T., Coholic, D., Schinke, R. J., McGannon, K. R., Peltier, D., & Pheasant, C. (2014). Moving beyond words: Exploring the use of an arts based method in Aboriginal community sport research. In R. J. Schinke, K. R. McGannon & B. Smith (Eds.), *Community based research in sport, exercise, and health* (pp. 26-45). Routledge.
- Cohen, J. (2013). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board Task Force report. *American Psychologist*, 73, 26-46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151>
- McShane, B. B., Gal, D., Gelman, A., Robert, C., & Tackett, J. L. (2019). Abandon statistical significance. *The American Statistician*, 73(sup1), 235-245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00031305.2018.1527253>
- Nosek, B. A., Ebersole, C. R., DeHaven, A. C., & Mellor, D. T. (2018). The preregistration revolution. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115, 2600-2606. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1708274114>

- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- Pek, J., & Flora, D. B. (2018). Reporting effect sizes in original psychological research: A discussion and tutorial. *Psychological Methods*, 23(2), 208-225.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/met0000126>
- Schinke, R. J., Middleton, T., Petersen, B., Kao, S., Lefebvre, D., & Habra, B. (2019). Social justice in sport and exercise psychology: A position statement. *Quest*, 71, 163-174.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2018.1544572>
- Schweizer, G., & Furley, P. (2016). Reproducible research in sport and exercise psychology: The role of sample sizes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 23, 114-122.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.11.005>
- Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11, 101-121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357>
- Sullivan, G. M., & Sargeant, J. (2011). Qualities of qualitative research: Part I. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 3, 449-452. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00221.1>
- Susser, M., & Yankauer, A. (1993). Prior, duplicate, repetitive, fragmented, and redundant publication and editorial decisions. *American Journal of Public Health*, 83, 792-793.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.83.6.792>