

Beware of Predatory Journals

Predatory journals are journals that claim to be open access and academic, but charge a large publication fee without providing any standard peer review, editorial, or publishing services. Some predatory publishers will publish low quality journals; others will collect publication fees and not publish anything at all. According to Jeffrey Beall, a librarian and expert on predatory journals, the number of predatory publishers has increased from 18 in 2011 to 923 in 2016.

What are the dangers of publishing in a predatory journal?

Loss of copyright

Many predatory publishers will require you to sign over the copyright of your research. If you try to withdraw from the process too late, they will own your research. Regaining copyright control to publish in a legitimate journal may require legal assistance.

Lack of academic credibility

Predatory journals are not considered true academic journals. They have low or non-existent impact factors, are not indexed in any of the major databases, and some of the journals also publish plagiarized articles.

How can you tell if a journal is predatory?

Large publication fees are not necessarily an indicator that a journal is predatory – many legitimate open access journals do charge a fee. Here are some ways to assess whether a journal is legitimate:

Unsolicited email

Predatory journals and publishers will send unsolicited emails requesting you to submit an article or invite you to be on the editorial board. Oftentimes, the journal will not exactly match your research interests. Legitimate journals may also send out calls for submissions, but all requests by email need to be thoroughly investigated, especially if you are unfamiliar with the publisher.

Non-Indexed/ Fake metrics

Predatory journals may claim that they are indexed in major databases such as Medline or Web of Science – do a quick search in the database to verify. They may also claim to have an Impact Factor – this can be verified in Journal Citation Reports. Be wary if they cite a metric system with which you are unfamiliar as it is probably one they made up themselves.

Physical Address

The publisher's address should match where the journal says it is from. For example, is "The American Journal of..." headquartered in the United States? A match does not guarantee

legitimacy, but a mismatch is a warning sign.

Publisher's Website and Practices

Be aware that predatory publisher websites have become more sophisticated and often look professional. Some warning signs/indicators:

- Are there actual articles or are the journals just empty shells?
- Are there more than one or two issues available?
- Is the publisher's owner also the editor of the journals?
- Are all the journals by the publisher within the same discipline? There are a few big publishers (i.e., Taylor & Francis, Springer, Elsevier) that publish a huge range of disciplines, but most new publishers start small before expanding.
- What is the publication schedule? Are they all "edited volumes"? The more irregular the schedule and the more special issues, the likelier the publisher is predatory.

Very short turnaround times from submission to acceptance

Do they promise a ridiculously fast turnaround time for peer review? Many of the journals will promise a ten-day or two week peer review process which is virtually impossible for a true peer review.

Check the whitelist

[The Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#) has a list of open access journals that must meet specific criteria. The list is not definitive/infallible. Being on the list does not automatically mean the journal is legitimate. However, not appearing on the DOAJ list is a warning sign.

There is no definitive blacklist of predatory publishers. Several organizations have attempted to create such a list but their accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Learn more about predatory journals

- [Potential predatory and legitimate biomedical journals: can you tell the difference? A cross-sectional comparison](#)
- [Stop this waste of people, animals and money](#)
- [How to avoid predatory journals- a five point plan](#)