



## TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR SCHOLARLY PAPER PUBLISHED\*

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After spending so much time researching, drafting, and revising your seminar or scholarly paper, you may decide that you want your work to be published. You can submit your work to a law review or upload onto SSRN, a database where authors share working papers and research. Many law schools have a flagship journal (e.g. Georgetown Law Journal) and some schools also have specialized journals that focus on particular areas of the law (e.g. Georgetown Journal of Law and Modern Critical Race Perspectives). Depending on the topic of your paper and the journal's specific submission requirements, you can submit your paper for consideration.

The following tips may help to guide you if you desire publication.

### **1. Submit: Take the plunge and send your paper out to journals.**

It is common practice to submit your paper to more than one journal at a time. Some journals accept direct submissions to their email or through mail. Other journals may accept submissions online through ExpressO or Scholastica.

ExpressO is an online service at <http://law.bepress.com/expresso/>. You upload your resume, cover letter, abstract and article onto the ExpressoO website and pay a fee of \$2 per submission. You can then select from hundreds of main law review and specialty journals.

Scholastica is another online service that has more than 200 participating journals. Each article submission costs \$5. Detailed information and a step-by-step tutorial about how to submit can be found at <http://help.scholasticahq.com/customer/portal/articles/1218626/>. You can also communicate with editors and receive reviews and decisions directly on their site.

Strategically send out your paper either by targeting journals based on their ranking or their subject matter. Decisions may take a long time, so you should keep submitting to other journals even if you have not received a response. Law reviews have varying timelines and page requirements, so always check the submission guidelines.

### **2. Scope: Tailor your paper depending on the journal to which you submit your paper.**

If you are submitting your paper to a more generalized journal, then you may not need to revise your paper. If your paper discusses feminist jurisprudence, you may have more luck submitting to a journal focused on women's legal issues rather than a main law journal or a

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\* By Amanda Wong (2016) with contributions from Sarah Tran (2009).

journal on immigration. However, you can also revise your paper on feminist jurisprudence so that it explicitly ties to immigration if you want to submit to that particular journal.<sup>†</sup>

### **3. Audience: Remember that your audience at student-run law journals will consist of skeptical law students.**

Many student-run law journals have a committee that filters through submissions. Keep in mind that many of these legal readers may be actively looking for a reason to reject your submission. Put your best foot forward by submitting an engaging and well thought-out argument. Also be sure to include counterarguments to anticipate these legal readers' doubts. You can also stand out from the crowd with an innovative or witty title, as long as the title is still descriptive of the content.

### **4. Conciseness: Keep it short and sweet to immediately capture their attention.**

Embrace clarity and brevity. Student editors have other commitments besides article and note selection so getting straight to the point is favorable. By keeping your submission concise, you will improve your chances as legal readers are often looking for succinct arguments that efficiently discuss, expand upon, or dispute a complicated topic.

Devote time to your cover letter and abstract. A cover letter should be informative, but brief, and include your student status (J.D. candidate, Georgetown University Law Center). An abstract is a short summary of your article that serves as the introduction to your paper. For busy legal readers, the abstract may convince editors that your paper is worth a thorough read. Your abstract should focus on the main concepts and explain how your paper differs from existing scholarship.

### **5. Creativity: Use original and creative arguments to engage and excite.**

A creative and unique argument or topic will set your paper apart in a long pile of submissions. Law journals that receive a high volume of submission may also have a fairly quick screening process so a creative paper will catch their attention right off the bat. Presenting a creative solution, explaining an interesting topic, or providing a novel argument will make the law review editors eager to publish your paper in their journal. Utilize creativity in your arguments both when you are prescribing and describing. Keep in mind that even when making a creative policy argument, it is imperative that you concretely connect your argument to the legal issues.

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<sup>†</sup> One example of a journal database where you can search for particular journals and see journal rankings is the Washington and Lee University School of Law library database: <https://law2.wlu.edu/libraryapps/onlinedatabases.asp>. For more information on journal databases and submission requirements, consult the library webpage guide on publishing law review notes and articles at <http://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/Publishing>.

Articles that are less creative may include articles that describe a problem without a solution, describe a single case without analysis, provide explanations of existing law, or responses to other author's work; and articles that do not take any stance. These types of articles are less likely to be selected for publication.

## **6. Citations: Support your arguments with thorough footnotes and citations.**

Even if your paper is creative and aligned with the journal's scope, your arguments need to be supported with substantial evidence. Thorough footnotes and citations will show the editors that you are committed to your topic and have dedicated a substantial amount of time to proving your argument. However, be careful not to over-cite and rely too heavily on footnotes because this may detract from your argument and may signal that your paper does not contain enough original content. Striking the right balance means that all outside propositions have citations, but the majority of your paper consists of your own original content.

## **7. Polishing: Present a polished version of your paper.**

Although students on law journals are expected to refine citations and correctly bluebook, you should still put some effort into polishing your sentences and footnotes. When deciding which paper to publish, law review editors choose papers that are more polished because editors appreciate papers that do not need substantial refinement.

When reviewing your note, proofread multiple times and look for grammatical, spelling, and citation errors. It may be helpful to get a second set of eyes to look over your piece. You may also format your piece (margins, spacing, footnotes, font) so it reflects the format of published articles.

## **8. Flexibility: Be prepared to make revisions.**

Some law reviews may extend an offer conditional on your willingness to make substantial revisions to your piece or will have a strict deadline schedule. Try to keep an open mind during this negotiation process because their comments could improve your paper. Also be aware that their revisions have the possibility of drastically changing parts of your paper. Being flexible with revisions and timing will improve your chances of publication. The negotiation process can vary depending on how often the journal publishes. For example, some journals publish annually whereas others may publish quarterly and will have a faster turnaround time.

## **9. Politeness: If you don't have anything nice to say... and how to respond to rejection.**

Always remember to remain cordial throughout the negotiation process and to avoid feeling frustrated if your paper is not chosen for publication. Keep in mind that any comments about your paper are part of the publication process. Constructive criticism is not personal.

Rejection is an inevitable part of the process. Some students submit to over 200 journals before receiving an offer. You may have more success with submissions to specialty journals

than to flagship journals. Feel free to re-submit your paper after significant revisions. Remaining polite ensures that your name is not associated with any rudeness.

### **10. Success: Celebrate your acceptance!**

After your paper gets a publication offer, you should celebrate, but refrain from accepting immediately unless the offer is from your top choice. Offers often come with deadlines between one day and several weeks, but you may be able to ask for an extension. After you receive an offer, contact the other journals with which you wish to publish. A publication offer can be used to leverage a decision from another journal as long as you tell them where you were offered an acceptance and when you need a decision by.

Once you accept an offer, be sure to notify all other journals to which you submitted your article to withdraw your article from review. Also, it is poor form to renege after accepting an offer. Once you have received a publication offer and accepted, feel proud and excited!

### **For further reference, see the following:**

- <http://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/Publishing>
- Elizabeth Fajans & Mary Falk, Scholarly Writing for Law Students: Seminar Papers, Law Review Notes, and Law Review Competition Papers (4th ed. 2011)
- The Georgetown Law Journal Notes Manual (2011)
- Eugene Volokh, Academic Legal Writing: Law Review Articles, Student Notes, Seminar Papers, and Getting on Law Review (4th ed. 2010)
- Eugene Volokh, Writing a Student Article, 48 J. Legal Educ. 247 (1998)
- Jessica L. Clark & Kristen E. Murray, Scholarly Writing: Ideas, Examples, and Execution (2d ed. 2012)