

Recommendations for thinking about your 2nd year research paper

Doctoral students must submit a research paper at the very beginning of their third year (Sept. 15). To simulate the journal review process, these papers will then be sent to two or three faculty for “single-blind” review. In other words, faculty will know who you are, but you will not know which faculty provided reviews. Faculty will be instructed to treat your paper as they would a journal article and will write a review similar to what they would send a journal seeking review of your paper. Those reviews will then be provided to you so that you can see what reviewers expect of journal submissions and the kinds of issues reviewers might raise about your work.

Following are some suggestions about how to prepare your paper for review.

- 1) Choose a research paper you have written for a class.
 - If you are not taking classes that require research papers, ask a faculty member in a class you are taking if you can use the class to write a research paper in place of usual assignments as a draft for this exercise.
 - Choose a paper that got a good grade and positive comments from the professor.
- 2) Good research papers and good journal articles usually have the following features.
 - They begin with a clear research question or puzzle which the paper will answer.
 - They lay out a clear plan by which that question or puzzle will be answered. These research plans will vary depending on the question or puzzle posed. If you are in doubt about what this looks like in your subfield or for your topic, consult with the faculty member for whom you wrote the paper. In most cases, your research plan will involve clear articulation of alternative explanations and clear explanation of how you will know supporting or disconfirming evidence and where you will look for such evidence.
 - They clearly articulate the findings or conclusions of the research. A reader should be in no doubt about what the paper’s “take-home” message is or why it is important.
 - Writing an abstract (150 words max) of your paper can be a helpful exercise. Abstracts should encapsulate all the paper’s key elements. Look at a journal to which you might submit your paper. What do abstracts of its papers look like? Try writing something similar for your paper. Writing an abstract can clarify your own understanding about the phrasing of your question, basics of your research plan, and importance of your findings.
- 3) Polish your paper.
 - No successful journal submission is a first draft. All have been through multiple revisions based on comments from multiple sources.
 - Ask two or three other students to read your paper and give comments. Their suggestions may not agree. This is normal. Part of this exercise is learning which comments to accept and use in revisions.
 - Scrutinize your writing. It should be clear, succinct, correct, and above all, engaging. If you have writing difficulties, **take your paper to the Writing Center**. Writing matters hugely in this profession. There is no room for sloppiness.
 - Comb your final draft for mechanical errors. Grammar, syntax, and mechanics should all be polished.

- 4) Mimicking journal submissions, here are a few specific instructions:
- Total word count: 9,000 to 13,000 (references and notes included)
 - Use APA or Chicago style in-text citations. Just be consistent and include a reference list.
 - Double spaced, Times New Roman, with page numbers.
 - Include an abstract (150 words max), the word count, and 5-10 keywords.
 - Submit the file as a PDF.