

Predatory Publishing A-Z Elements

Predatory journals have no clear-cut definition and may be hard to identify. There is no single checklist for determining if a publisher or journal is predatory. However, reputable publishers and journals share some common qualities and features. Consider these A-Z elements when evaluating publishers and journals.

Authors

The authors are affiliated with, or the journal is established by academic and research institutions or organisations. This information is easily found in the publication or on their website.

Be vigilant

Use a tool such as [Think. Check. Submit.](#) to determine if a journal or publisher is legitimate or predatory. It is good practice to thoroughly research the journal before submitting a paper.

Copyright

User and author rights and copyright information are clearly stated on the publisher or journal website. See the [Copyright](#) section of our [Compliance guide](#) for more information.

Directory/DOI

Open access journals are listed in the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#). Articles have a unique Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

Editors/ ditorial boards

Editors or Editorial Boards consist of recognised experts in the publication's subject field.

Fees

Publication fees are clearly explained and easy to find on the publisher's website. They should not be hidden.

Google

[Google Research](#) offers quality research and [Google has collaborated with industry and university researchers](#) to publish research. [Google Scholar Metrics](#) is an option for locating [health and medical sciences journal rankings and impact factors](#).

Hijacked journals

Hijacked journals are predatory journals which are created to look like reputable journals. Reputable journals have no connection to these hijacked journals. A list of hijacked journals can be found [here](#).

ISSN

Every journal has its own unique and regular ISSN. Hijacked journals typically use the ISSN of a legitimate journal.

Journal ranking & impact factor

Predatory journals may advertise a fake or inflated impact factor. For more information about journal ranking and impact factor, visit the [Journal Ranking](#) section of our [Publishing guide](#).

Keen on research

Reputable publishers in medical and science fields invest resources in research outcome and innovation, promoting current research and participating in [professional development events](#). See an example of this from the [BMJ](#).

Landscape

The academic publishing landscape is clearly defined, e.g. the publishing and access options and the editing and publishing services that are included with each product line or brands. Here is an example from publisher [Springer Nature](#).

Methodology

Evaluate the quality of the papers in the journal, i.e. methodology, use of language, formatting, authors etc. Predatory journals may copy or translate English and non-English articles from reputable journals. Beware of red flags such as incorrect or clumsy use of scientific terms and language, formatting errors and more.

Navigation

Website navigation is well designed and maintained. The language used is at the standard expected of an academic publication.

Open access

A publisher who provides open access options should have a clear Open Access Policy on its website. They should be a member of the [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association \(OASPA\)](#). For more information about open access and open access policies, visit the [Open Access](#) section of our [Publishing Guide](#).

Peer review

Peer review processes play an important role in quality control. It must be rigorous and explained clearly on the publishers' website. Predatory journals typically have poor or non-existent peer review processes.

Quota

Reputable journals and publishers will have a quota for republishing the same or modified version of a paper. They may not accept a paper which has already been submitted to other journal(s). Predatory journals tend to publish most, or all, the submissions they receive.

Requirements

Reputable journals provide clear requirements regarding the submission of papers. Predatory journals may prefer email submissions.

Scope

Journal scope is well defined and clearly stated on the journal's website. Published articles align with the scope of the publication or the expertise of the editors and editorial board.

Track record

Publishers and journals have a good track record on quality publishing and management within their scope and have been working to a regular publishing schedule.

Unwanted solicitation

Reputable publishers and journals typically do not send call-for-paper emails or other forms of solicitation to researchers individually. These methods are often used by predatory journals. Use caution!

Verifiability

Contact information of the publishers and authors are clearly provided and available on the website and/or publications.

Workflows

The publishing schedule and publication frequency is clearly stated. Publishing options and workflows or stages, including the peer review process, are clearly indicated.

X (Retraction policy)

Reputable journals have clear retraction policies while predatory journals do not.

Y (Why and how?)

Publishers and journal editors are approachable and will answer publishing-related enquiries and clarifications.

Zero tolerance for plagiarism

Publishers promote zero tolerance for plagiarism and have put steps in place to prevent plagiarism during the publishing process. See [Elsevier Nature](#) and [Springer](#) for examples of prevention policies.

Further reading

Beall J. (2016). Dangerous Predatory Publishers Threaten Medical Research. *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, 31(10), 1511-1513. <https://doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2016.31.10.1511>

Berger, M. (2017). Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Predatory Publishing but Were Afraid to Ask. *CUNY Academic Works*. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ny_pubs/141/

Menon, V. (2019). Hijacked journals: what they are and how to avoid them. <https://clarivate.com/blog/hijacked-journals-what-they-are-and-how-to-avoid-them/>

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