**Open Access FAQs**

**What is open access?**

Open Access (OA) publishing enables the free, immediate, and online availability of research and scholarly products. Open Access journals have been successfully producing and disseminating high quality research for over a decade. The [Directory of Open Access Journals](https://doaj.org/) (DOAJ) currently lists over 12,000 vetted Open Access Journals.

**What’s the difference between full open access, hybrid open access, and embargoed open access publishing models?**

* **Full Open Access** journals make all of their content immediately openly available at the time of publication. These journals do not operate on a traditional subscription model but instead levy Article Processing Charges (APCs) to cover publication costs. Note that not all Full OA journals impose APCs.
* **Hybrid Open Access** journals are subscription-based journals which give authors the option to purchase immediate open access to an individual paper. Only those papers that have paid-APCs will be openly available at the time of publication. Hybrid journals are effectively paid twice for their Open Access content.
* **Embargoed Open Access** journals are subscription-based journals that make their content openly available after a limited embargo period. In this model, new content is only available to subscribers, while older content is openly accessible. There are no APCs for embargoed content.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| OA Model | Subscription | APC | Embargo | Example(s) |
| Full OA | No | Yes | No | BMC Family Practice, BMC Medicine, Annals of Family Medicine, Family Medicine |
| Hybrid OA | Yes | Yes (on top of subscription costs) | No | The Lancet, Epidemiologic Reviews, American Journal of Public Health, American Journal of Preventive Medicine |
| Embargoed OA | Yes | No | Yes | JAMA Internal Medicine, New England Journal of Medicine |
| None | Yes | No | No | Annual Reviews of Public Health |

**If I must submit to a journal that does not have an open access option or I don’t have the funds to cover the open access fee, can I still make my article available to the public?**

Yes, through what’s known as Green Open Access, or self-archiving, many journals will allow you to post a version of your manuscript in a repository, whether it’s an institutional repository or a discipline-related repository. You can check [SHERPA/RoMEO](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo) for your journal’s policy.

**How do I evaluate open access journals?**

Here are some questions to ask when selecting journals for publication:

1. **Who is the Publisher?**

Is it a reputable publisher in your discipline? Do they have an established archive of journal issues? If it's an open access journal, do they have an OASPA Membership? [OASPA](http://oaspa.org/) is committed to setting standards and promoting open access publishing. These Open Access publishers share information and are more likely to have higher standards than non-members.

1. **What is the quality of the articles in the journal?**

Read a few articles. Are they well-written, and/or provide data and a sound research method?

1. **Is the publisher 'predatory'?**

Predatory Publishers are publishers that charge APCs for Open Access publishing without providing the editorial and administrative services associated with legitimate journals.Here are some characteristics of predatory publishers, however, you will need to make your own judgements about the quality of the journal in the absence of an authoritative list.

* Do they have a recent date of establishment and an unusually high number of journals?  A publisher that has a high number of journals (50+) and is recently established may be more questionable in terms of their ability to do high-quality peer evaluation of submitted materials.
* What is their profit model? A non-profit organization may have more altruistic motives for launching an open access publication than a for-profit organization. Note that open access sometimes involves a fee to be paid by the author to support publication and peer-review costs, and some publishers have created a business model that capitalizes on this.
* Did they solicit your article or chapter? Sometimes, publishers will send out notices to students or academics offering to publish their work for a fee. While this practice is sometimes used by reputable open access and traditional publishers, direct e-mail solicitations are a possible sign that one should spend some time researching the publisher before responding.
* What is the journal’s acceptance procedure? How long did it take for the journal to accept your paper for publication - did they immediately accept it before a review process? Too quick acceptance of a paper and a timeline that would not allow enough time for quality peer review may be cause for more investigation.
* Who are the authors that have previously published in the journal? Are they all from the same institution? Are there repeated authors or groups across a few issues, or one dominant author?

1. **Is the journal listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)?**

For open access journals, [DOAJ](http://doaj.org/) is an Open Access Directory that reviews the quality of the journals it accepts and adds to its listings. Journals accepted into DOAJ tend to be more reputable.

1. **What are the journal’s metrics?**

Check if the journal has a CiteScore. The metric represents the average number of citations per article within a journal and is based on data from Scopus and can be accessed there as well.

Citation-based journal metrics, including Journal Impact Factors, SJRs, and CiteScores, are sometimes considered a quantitative and objective measure of the quality of journals and, increasingly, by implication, the scholars who publish in them (the higher the metric the higher the quality). However, there are several reasons not to take these metrics at face value. Depending on the lag time in publishing, size of the discipline and how self-contained it may be, the extent to which the discipline depends on recently published material, and many other factors, citation-based journal metrics have received varying degrees of support and rejection in the academic world.

1. **Are articles from that journal being cited?**

Check the citation counts for articles in Scopus and/or Google Scholar.

1. **What Peer Review standards do they use?**

Check if the peer review guidelines are openly posted by the journal or contact the journal to ask for details about their peer review process.

1. **Who is on the Editorial Board?**

Identify who is on the editorial board, read profiles, or look up board members on the Internet to review their credentials.

1. **Is the journal indexed?**

Are the journals’ articles listed in major databases? You can check PubMed, PsychInfo, or Scopus for this information.

**Looking for more resources on evaluating open access journals?**

Here are just a few:

* [Think. Check. Submit.](http://thinkchecksubmit.org/check/) provides a checklist of quality indicators for a journal.
* [Open Access Journal Quality Indicators](http://www.gvsu.edu/library/sc/open-access-journal-quality-indicators-5.htm) is a listing of positive and negative indicators of journal quality.
* [Directory of Open Access Journals](https://doaj.org/) is a database of high-quality, peer-reviewed Open Access journals.
* [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association](http://oaspa.org/) is a group of committed Open Access publishers with criteria for membership and a code of conduct.

**Need More Help?**

If you need any assistance with any of these topics, or have any questions, please contact the library’s Research & Scholarly Communication Services Department. Manager: Sally Gore, [sally.gore@umassmed.edu](mailto:sally.gore@umassmed.edu); 508-856-1966.

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