

Identifying and avoiding predatory publishing practices

Most of the mentioned documents (incl. this one) can be found on the website 'Ethics and integrity in research'
<https://www.uni-lj.si/en/research/ethics-and-integrity-in-research>

University Office for Research
Unit for Research Ethics and Integrity



Contact/Document custodians:
REI@uni-lj.si

Harmfulness

Predatory publishing practices, which deploy misleading or fraudulent practices for reasons of profit, damage researchers' reputation and integrity as well as the **credibility of, and trust in, science**. The number of such practices and publishers is swelling and leading to increased **(professional, financial and reputational) harm**. While early-career scholars may find it especially difficult to navigate 'opportunities' offered by predatory publishers, many an experienced researcher finds it similarly hard to distinguish sufficiently early on whether they are dealing with a predatory journal or simply a new, ambitious, open access journal just trying to establish itself.

Unethical conduct

'Establishing, supporting, or deliberately using journals, publishers, events, or services that undermine the quality of research ("predatory" journals or conferences and paper mills)' is considered a **violation of research integrity**, according to the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (2023: 11).

Guidance from UL Guidelines on Ethical Conduct in Scientific Publishing

The section on 'Choosing a quality journal/publisher and avoiding predatory journals/publishers' of these UL Guidelines acknowledge that the usually faster procedures for accepting papers for publication with predatory publishers **come at the expense of the review process**, which is then often superficial or even non-existent. This compromises the quality of published research/science, as it is precisely rigorous peer review that is supposed to ensure the sufficient scientific and professional **quality of the paper**. The [Guidelines](#) provide **further direction** on this issue:

When choosing a publisher or journal, authors should therefore responsibly check what publication quality control procedures the selected publisher provides, in addition to any other costs and conditions of publication with that publisher or journal.	To avoid predatory journals and publishers, authors can consult various lists of such journals (for example, if the journal/publisher is unknown to us, we can use the list on the Think.Check.Submit. website to verify that it is not predatory).	Authors should pay attention to warning signs such as a lack of peer review or deficiencies in the review process, overly proactive and non-selective solicitation of authors or acquisition of material for publication, lack of transparency in procedures, unclear editorial and publishing policies, including unclear ethical rules and standards, short time between manuscript submission and acceptance for publication, or even promises of rapid publication, unclear or inappropriate composition of the editorial board, etc.	For quality open access journals that follow good editorial practices, it is recommended by ALLEA to search the databases listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Web of Science (WoS) as a starting point.
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Various checklists and criteria for identification of predatory practices

<https://thinkchecksubmit.org> and <https://thinkcheckattend.org>

Check out also:

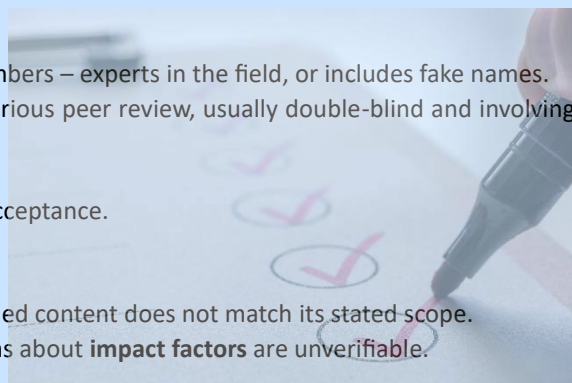
<https://odprteobjave.si/en/untrustworthy-publishing-practices/>
<https://beallslit.net/how-to-recognize-predatory-journals/>
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383324>
<https://libguides.mf.uni-lj.si/c.php?g=412371&p=4636864>
<https://rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/idp-vrr.html>
<https://www.stoppredatorypractice.com/>
<https://www.predatoryjournals.org/>



Bear in mind that predatory and fraudulent practices often **extend beyond** mere publication acquisition. They also include predatory conferences, 'paper mills' and new, emerging practices such as journal hijacking (fraudulent websites mirroring reputable journals), strategic co-authorship schemes (where individuals are added to papers without meeting authorship standards to inflate metrics), predatory pre-print servers, selling authorship, retconning etc.

List of main tell-tale signs of predatory practices

- ☐ **Editorial board** is unknown, not identified or composed of relevant members – experts in the field, or includes fake names.
- ☐ Details on **peer review** are missing or inadequate (not testifying of a serious peer review, usually double-blind and involving also independent/external reviewers).
- ☐ Lack of **transparency** in procedures (Are details of procedures known?).
- ☐ Promise of an **unrealistic quick turnover** from submission to decision/acceptance.
- ☐ Journal or publisher **guarantees acceptance** of your manuscript.
- ☐ It is not easy to **identify and contact** the publisher.
- ☐ The journal's **scope** is ill-defined or overly broad, or the journal's published content does not match its stated scope.
- ☐ The **indexation** and **archiving** of articles is non-existent or unclear; claims about **impact factors** are unverifiable.
- ☐ Charging of **fees** is insufficiently clear (see below).
- ☐ Missing (or too simplified) **guidelines for authors**.
- ☐ Missing or unclear published **editorial policies**, including on publication ethics and open access.
- ☐ Unclear affiliations and **memberships** (Is the publisher/journal a member of [COPE](#), of [OASPA](#) or other relevant associations, listed in [DOAJ](#) or other trusted sources, hosted on well-recognised platforms etc.?).
- ☐ Aggressive, predatory behaviour in **soliciting manuscripts** (Are you being constantly emailed from the same or similar publisher, inviting you to submit your work to them and possibly enticing you with flattery (for example, regarding your previous publications) or with additional invitations to edit a volume, join their editorial board or present at (possibly partly or fully financially covered) their conferences abroad?).



Fees or APCs (Article Processing Charges)

Not all journals or publishers that charge fees for publication are considered 'predatory'. Article processing charges (or APCs) and Book Processing Charges (BPCs) may be **charged legitimately** for e.g. Gold Open Access or to cover publication production costs, compensate editorial and reviewers' work (where this is the case) or costs of distribution, marketing, online hosting, archiving. In all these cases, APC payment is required after acceptance but before the publication. Furthermore, some fees may be charged for any colour figures or other deviations from regular papers. All these should, however, be clearly indicated on the journal's website.

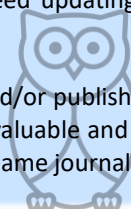
If, however, (a) the costs very much deviate from the norm or usual amount charged or (b) the costs cannot be explained or (c) their payment is required pre-acceptance, this should be a red flag. In particular, if fees are charged by a journal/publisher with extremely high acceptance rate (or one that 'accepts' all submissions), such a journal or publisher is very likely to be predatory.

Crucial questions in this regard relate to the clarity on what [fees](#) will be charged. Is it explained on the journal's website what these fees are meant for and when and how they will be charged? Are the currency and the amount of these charges mentioned? Does the publisher explain how they are financially supported and whether waivers for these fees are available or not? Does it include a contact information (e.g. email address) for further queries on these questions?

Due diligence

It is expected of researchers to demonstrate **due diligence** and **responsibility** by finding the legitimate publishing outlet for their work. While national lists (e.g. [ARIS](#) lists of valorised journals and international publishers) can, to some extent, **help** as well, you should not solely rely on these, as they may contain mistakes (e.g. listing also some publishers that are at least contentious, considered 'vanity press' if not outright predatory) or need updating or fine-tuning (e.g. [several MDPI](#) journals are considered predatory, as well as [some Frontiers](#) ones).

A good **rule of thumb** is: have you heard of this journal and/or publisher before; do your colleagues publish in/with them; do they contain material that you yourself might cite or consider valuable and of quality; is the journal topic-specific or does it publish on everything and anything, a mishmash of topics within the same journal issue?



Further information and continuous updates

If in doubt: consult your colleagues, supervisors, more experienced researchers, herein listed links; opt for a less dubious publisher.

For **regular updates and guidance**, follow the discussion and opinions of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics):

<https://publicationethics.org/news-opinion/predatory-behaviour-publication-ethics>

<https://publicationethics.org/news-opinion/identifying-fake-journals>

<https://publicationethics.org/guidance/discussion-document/predatory-publishing>

