

# How to publish your article in the *American Journal of Evaluation* (and similar journals):

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Guidance for Graduate Students  
and 1<sup>st</sup> Time Authors

February 2008

# Purpose

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- To increase the probability that graduate students and 1<sup>st</sup> time authors develop papers that are likely to be favorably reviewed
- To prepare authors for what to expect in the editorial review process

# Session Overview

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- Assessing the fit of your ideas to the journal
- The submission and editorial process
- Tips on writing successful manuscripts
- Q&A

# Assessing Fit

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The Journal's Mission

# Research Prospective Journals

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- Does it publish material consistent with the aims of my paper?
- Does it publish material in the style of my paper?
- Does it reach my intended audience?

# *American Journal of Evaluation*

## Mission

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- original papers about the methods, theory, and practice of evaluation
- the best work in and about evaluation to improve its knowledge base and practice
- likely to be of interest to a wide range of evaluators

# *Evaluation Review* Mission

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- latest applied evaluation methods
- latest quantitative and qualitative methodological developments
- applied research issues
- research briefs of ongoing or completed studies

# Submission Categories for Unsolicited Material (*AJE*)

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- Articles
- Forum
- Evaluation Evaluations
- Teaching Evaluation
- The Historical Record
- Method Notes
- Dialog
- Letters to the Editor



# Submission Categories for Solicited Material (*AJE*)

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- Ethical Challenges
- Exemplars
- Book Reviews

# *AJE* Readers

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- 5,160 members of the American Evaluation Association representing 60 countries
- Diverse disciplines
- Diverse areas of practice
- 956 libraries and consortia (67% non-US!)

# Mismatches

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- “The Evaluation Report”
- “The Ms. with an Identity Crisis”
- “The Preliminary Ms.”
- “The Highly Specialized Ms.”
- “The Op Ed Piece”

# Know Your Journal

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The *AJE* Quiz

# *AJE* Facts

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- We publish roughly 59 manuscripts each year
- BUT 40% are papers that we solicit (e.g, Ethical Challenges, Exemplars)

# AJE Facts

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- *Evaluation News*
- *Evaluation Practice*
- *American Journal of Evaluation*

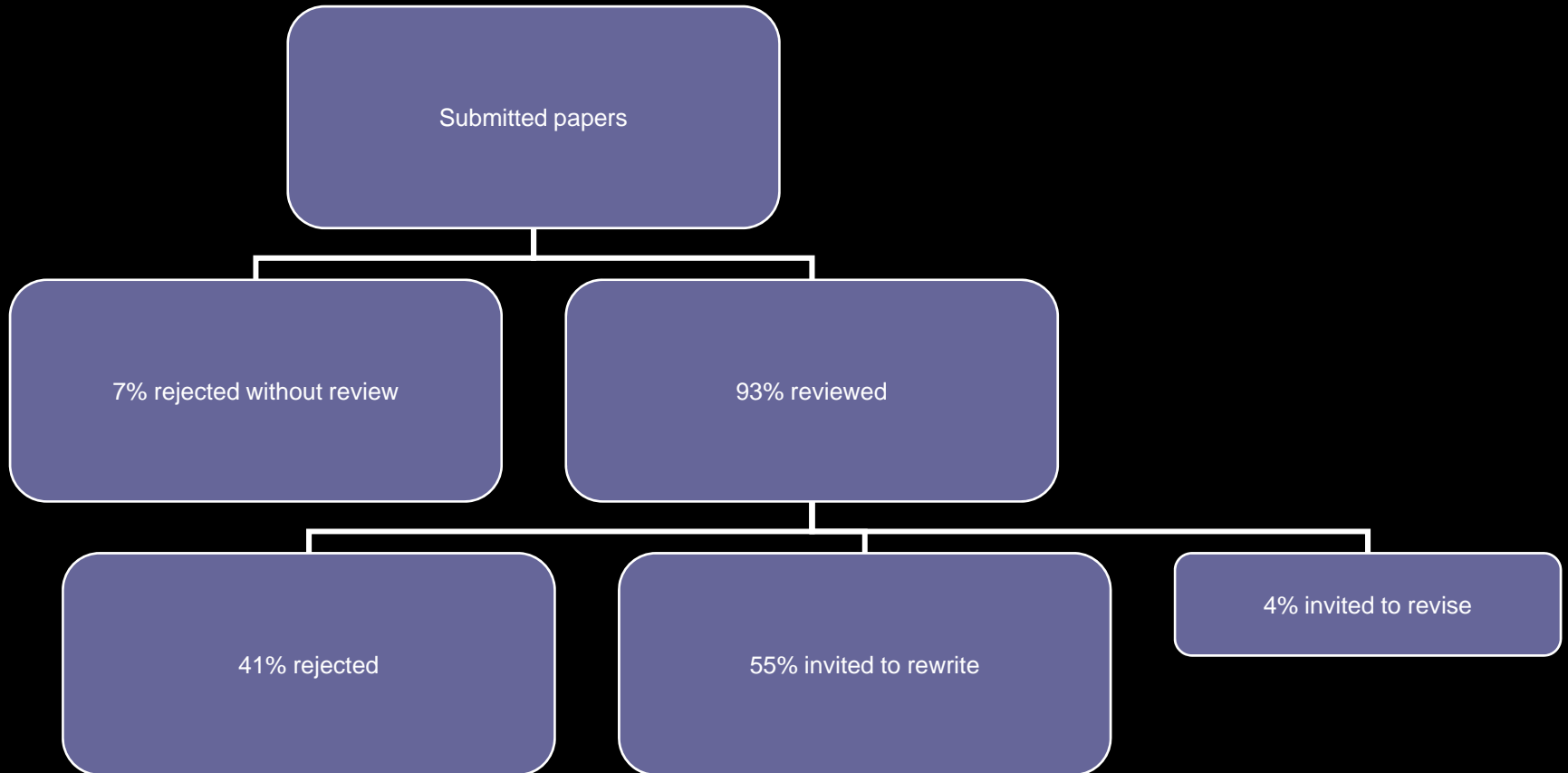
# *AJE* Facts

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- No paper is accepted without revision!
- Two revision requests is common and three not at all unusual.

# Initial Decision Flow for Manuscripts Submitted in 2006

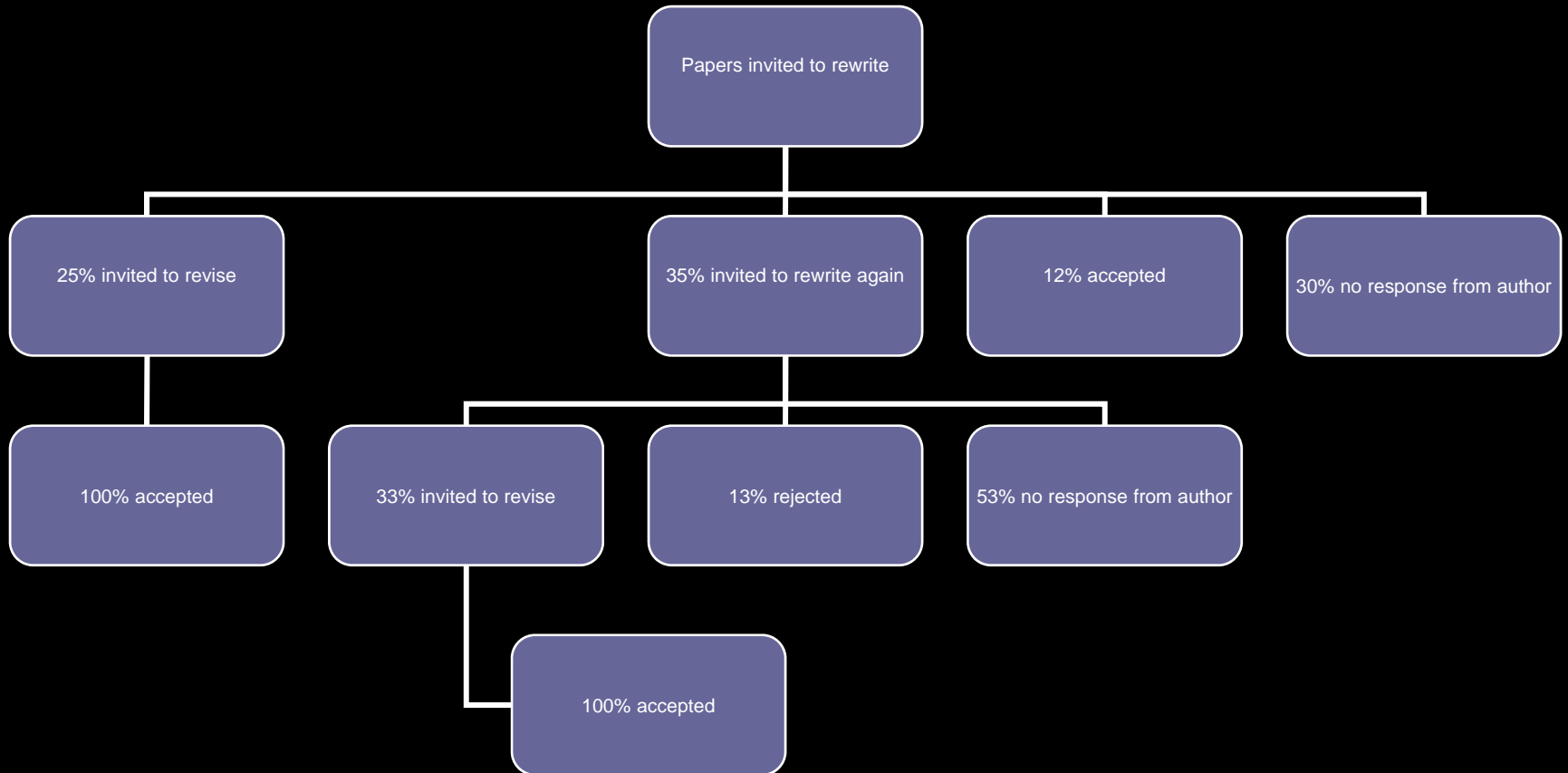
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# Following the Chain: Revise and Rewrite Manuscripts

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# How Manuscripts are Processed

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- Administrative review
- Review for suitability to *AJE* and conformity to submission requirements
- Assignment to an editor
- Assignment to reviewers
- Initial editorial decision

# Initial Decision Categories

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- Revise (<1%)
- Rewrite (54%)
- Reject (45%)

# Re-review Decision Categories

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- Accept (usually pending minor editing)
- Conditional accept, pending revisions
- Revise
- Rewrite
- Reject

# Average Minimum Time

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- Article preparation (?)
- Submission to review (2 days)
- Submission to decision (38 days)
- Revision/rewriting (120 days)
- Submission to 2<sup>nd</sup> decision (38 days)
- Submission of accepted paper and TOC (15 days)
- Production (120 days)

# Traits of Excellent Submissions

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The Top 10 List of *AJE* Reviewers

# Addresses an Important Topic

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- Important for evaluation theory, practice, and/or methods
- The introduction is informed and insightful about the topic:
  - Grounded in the previous literature (essential)
  - Also grounded in a larger view of the field (preferred)

# Clearly Describes What it Offers a Reader

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- Understands who reads *AJE*
- Articulates the specific, concrete benefits of reading the manuscript



# Is Methodologically Sound and Logically Adequate

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- High-quality concepts, measurement tools, data collection
- Techniques, samples, response rate, analyses, etc.
- Each methodological aspect is well-explained in appropriate detail

# Presents Findings that are Compelling and Easy to Understand

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- Each claim is fully substantiated
- Tables, graphics, etc. are used wisely
- Narrative is easy to follow – on its own; tied to the above

# Acknowledges its Own Limitations

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- What it doesn't claim
- What else might be happening – instead; in addition
- Explicitly considers and describes any contingencies

# Offers Conclusions and Interpretations that are Compelling

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- Devotes appropriate space to this aspect
- Presented clearly and directly
- All arguments are logical, make good sense

# Adds to Our Current Knowledge

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- Offers insightful, critical analysis
- Puts its conclusions and interpretations in the necessary context of previous literature and a larger view of the field

# Clearly Presents the Implications for the Future

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- How the manuscript should influence theory, practice, and/or methods
- Logical next steps on this topic – research, development, thinking, etc.

# Is a Well-written Document

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- Has a logic structure/organization – Please outline before writing!
- Defines and explains key concepts or terms (e.g., evaluation capacity, collaboration, stakeholder relationships)
- Uses as little jargon as possible
- English spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct

# Is of the Appropriate Scope

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- Appropriate number of pages – space devoted overall
- Appropriate level of detail – space devoted to each aspect
- Appropriate level of complexity – not simple-minded, not dense