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

Guidance for Graduate Students and 1st Time Authors
February 2008
Purpose

- To increase the probability that graduate students and 1st 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

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

The Journal’s Mission
Research Prospective Journals

- 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

- 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

- 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)

- Articles
- Forum
- Evaluation Evaluations
- Teaching Evaluation
- The Historical Record
- Method Notes
- Dialog
- Letters to the Editor
Submission Categories for Solicited Material (AJE)

- Ethical Challenges
- Exemplars
- Book Reviews
AJE Readers

- 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

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

The AJE Quiz
**AJE Facts**

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

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

- 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

Submitted papers

- 7% rejected without review
- 93% reviewed
  - 41% rejected
  - 55% invited to rewrite
  - 4% invited to revise
Following the Chain: Revise and Rewrite Manuscripts

- Papers invited to rewrite
  - 25% invited to revise
    - 100% accepted
  - 35% invited to rewrite again
    - 13% rejected
    - 53% no response from author
  - 12% accepted
  - 30% no response from author
How Manuscripts are Processed

- 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

- Revise (<1%)
- Rewrite (54%)
- Reject (45%)
Re-review Decision Categories

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

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

The Top 10 List of AJE Reviewers
Addresses an Important Topic

- 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

- Understands who reads *AJE*
- Articulates the specific, concrete benefits of reading the manuscript
Is Methodologically Sound and Logically Adequate

- 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

- 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

- 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

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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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