PREDATORY PUBLISHING is the practice of soliciting research manuscripts to publish for profit while bypassing peer review and editorial standards.

Predatory publishers appear genuine, often emailing authors invitations to submit articles. They quickly accept manuscripts and charge the author fees, but unlike legitimate open-access publishers who sometimes charge fees, predatory journals don't provide proper peer review and appropriate editorial oversight. In fact, scammers
- Make false claims of peer review, indexing, and archiving
- Falsify journal ranking and impact factors
- Don't follow standard policies for high quality scholarly publishing, such as those outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME).
- Don't meet standards for professional scientific publications.²
- Sometimes list author names, editors, scientists, and their affiliations on their editorial pages without permission
- Buy-out reputable journals, then continue publication under a name that was previously considered legitimate.³

In April 2019 the Federal Trade Commission ruled that OMICS International, a large publishing company from India, pay fifty million dollars to authors and others the company deceived. OMICS publishes about 700 journals and sponsors hundreds of annual vanity conferences and workshops using predatory practices.⁴

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Warning Signs of a predatory publication

- An invitation to publish comes in an email, sometimes with flowery language, misspellings, and strange references
- Contact email addresses are non-professional/non-journal affiliated
- Publisher’s website contains spelling and grammatical errors. Images are distorted or fuzzy, misleading, and/or unauthorized
- Website’s homepage language targets authors
- Website promotes the purported Index Copernicus Value
- Poor or no description of the manuscript handling process
- Manuscripts submitted through email rather than a web management system
- Rapid publication promised with ineffective or no peer review
- No retraction policy
- Limited or no information on content’s digitally preservation
- Initially, the journal charges authors a low article processing or publication fee (for example, below $150), but charges anywhere from $500 to $3,000 to publish once an article is accepted
- A journal claiming to be open access fails to mention copyright
- Publication’s scope of interest includes non-biomedical subjects alongside biomedical topics

Best Practices

IF YOU’RE INTERESTED IN PUBLISHING

- Check some basic reference lists to see if a journal is either predatory or legitimate, such as doaj.org, plos.org, predatoryjournals.com, cabells.com, thinkchecksubmit.org, and Medline/Publine indexing. Although these lists are not extensive, they can serve as valuable reference points to determine a journal’s legitimacy.
- Don’t respond to a predatory journal’s email
- Check for a legitimate website.
- Select journals of interest early in the research process and consult with mentors and trusted colleagues
- Educate your co-authors so they can also investigate suspicious journals
- Check your own manuscript references for predatory journal articles
- Carefully review any legal matters with university counsel, such as written agreements, copyrights, usage limits, etc.
- If you’re a graduate student, protect your thesis or dissertation through an embargo

IF YOU’RE A Peer REVIEWER OR EDITOR

- Thoroughly investigate any request to be a reviewer or editor of a journal
- Check the credentials of other reviewers and editors, and don’t be afraid to contact them and ask questions
- Be suspicious of the same issues authors face, including the pressure to respond to email solicitation
- Avoid journals that don’t carefully explain in advance your role and responsibilities in writing. Ask about the volume of work and required response time.
- Question journals that minimize the importance of your review and don’t respond to questions
- Investigate journals with multiple “editors-in-chief”

It’s often not easy or possible to retrieve a manuscript or submission fees once they are submitted to a predatory journal. It’s worth taking a few extra measures to ensure that your work is published ethically for your benefit as well as that of your scientific or academic community.

ULTIMATELY, THE BEST DEFENSE IS A STRONG OFFENSE.