

# Writing for professional publication. Part 1: Motivation

John Fowler



## Abstract

Writing for professional publication can be a daunting prospect, but, with a little effort and the right motivation, it can be a rewarding and career-enhancing experience. And the good news is, it's not as difficult as it may sound. In this first part of a series of articles on writing for professional publication, John Fowler, an experienced nursing lecturer and author, discusses perhaps the most important factor in seeing your work published: motivation. Forthcoming issues will explore different aspects of publication and include advice and practical tips.

**Keywords:** Publication ■ Professional development ■ Career development

Have you ever tried to turn an essay you've written into an article for publication? Sometimes a lecturer will say to you, 'You should get this work published'. The student then battles with the electronic submission systems and eventually manages to submit the essay to a journal, only to receive a rejection letter some months later saying it is not suitable for that journal. The dejected student then gives up, never submitting any more work in the future. This is avoidable, but it does need extra work.

An academic essay which receives a good mark from your lecturer does not automatically make a good article for publication in a professional journal.

Dr John Fowler wrote his first article for publication as a staff nurse 30 years ago. Since then he has published over 50 articles in a variety of publications, edited seven nursing text books and is the series editor for 20 books in the Quay Book's 'Fundamental Aspects of Nursing Care' series. He has supported over 40 nurses in their early writing for successful publications.

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## Writing for professional publication: some FAQs

- Do I need to have been an 'A grade' student? - No
- Do I need to have undertaken some research? - No
- I'm a staff nurse, does that matter? - No
- Do I need to have been published before? - No
- Will I make a lot of money? - No!

However, if you have an essay, a dissertation or some sort of written work from your clinical area, and are prepared to do some additional work to refine and adapt it, then you can almost certainly get it published. This series of articles will give you advice that will help you on your way.

So, what is the first and most important step in getting your work published? It is not the quality of the critical analysis, nor the general quality of the writing. While these are important factors in academic writing and are relevant in achieving publication for your work, they are not the most important factor in getting your work published. The

most important factor in getting your work published is your drive, or motivation, to want to get it published. If you don't really want to get published, then the first knock-back will stop you.

What motivates and drives people to pursue that initial idea or whim to publish their work and put in that additional effort?


For some it may be part of their role. If they fail to achieve a certain number of publications their position is in jeopardy. This, as you can imagine, is a strong motivator. It is one that drives a number of research academics in university departments. University departments are rated on the quality and quantity of research publications and this rating attracts considerable funding, hence the drive.

Other people's motivation for writing is that they want their CV to reflect this level of work and achievement. People applying for a clinical nurse specialist role, a nurse consultant post or a university lecturer post will be at an advantage if they have been previously published.

Another factor that motivates some people is an ambition to prove that they can achieve publication in a professional journal, maybe for their family, or often just for themselves.

Some staff, often those who work in specialist areas, have an aspect of practice that they have developed and wish to share with others, if it is a development that they feel very strongly about.

Finally, there are those people who just want to get something published, to see their name in print.

If you want to become a published nurse then the first step is to be motivated. If you can develop your motivation, the other articles in this series will get you there. 

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