

# Steps to peer-reviewed publication

What it actually takes · More Than An Editor · [morethananeditor.com](https://morethananeditor.com) · 2026

**This is a decision guide, not an encouragement.** It sets out the steps, the hours, and the costs so you can decide whether a peer-reviewed paper is worth it to you. **For some people it plainly is. For others it is not, and we would rather you worked that out before you start.**

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## First: two kinds of journal

**Reputable journals.** They do not accept money in exchange for publication. They are independent, and submitted papers get genuine peer review.

**Predatory journals.** Pay to play. They will publish almost anything.

**If you only need something published, the predatory route is cheapest** — low effort, perhaps ten or twenty hours to prepare. **It will also get you a zero citation count and will not help a CV meant to advance an academic career.** Some institutions now treat it as a negative.

**Check before you submit anywhere.** Our free checking guide — *Is this journal real?* at [morethananeditor.com/journalcheck](https://morethananeditor.com/journalcheck) — covers the manual method and a prompt you can paste into any AI tool.

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## What it costs, and why

**Reputable journals have specific length limits, and the standard is high.** Your paper competes with scholars submitting from senior universities worldwide.

### Writing

**Our internal rule of thumb is that a finished 250-word page of a thesis takes about an hour. For a peer-reviewed article it is two to three.** The work needs thinking, writing, and rewriting before it is anywhere near submission.

### Statistical work

**You will need a particularly good statistician, and the statistics required for publication are often quite different from those in your thesis.**

**Thirty-five to forty hours of a statistician's time is not unusual, and in difficult cases it is more.** Your published paper may test a different hypothesis and ask different questions than your thesis did — which means new analysis, not a reformatting of the old.

### Tables, charts, and illustrations

**These may have to be built from scratch,** and turning them into a format a journal will accept can take a graphics specialist.

**On rates.** We publish every rate we charge at [morethananeditor.com/pricing](https://morethananeditor.com/pricing), with no ranges and no *contact us for a quote*. **Post-doctoral and publication work is priced there, and statistical analysis is quoted on inquiry because the scope varies so widely.** We have deliberately not printed figures in this guide — a rate in a PDF goes stale and the page does not.

## The steps

*Hours shown are person-hours and they are estimates. Thinking time is not included, and there is usually more of it than anybody plans for.*

|           |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Initial discussion and literature review</b><br>You, us, and the statistician. 1 to 2 hours.                                                                        |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Initial statistical modelling</b><br>If step 1 supports going ahead. Several hours.                                                                                 |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Hypothesis and research question development</b><br>1 to 2 hours.                                                                                                   |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Statistical analysis</b><br>10 to 40 hours, sometimes more. <b>The statistics have to be completely solid.</b>                                                      |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Outline</b><br>1 to 2 hours. Statistician, us, and possibly you.                                                                                                    |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Identify the tables and illustrations needed</b><br>Time unknown — it depends entirely on what the paper needs, if anything.                                        |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Write the paper</b><br><b>1 to 3 hours per finished page.</b> A 10,000-word paper is 40 double-spaced pages at 250 words a page — <b>so 40 to 120 person-hours.</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Review the content</b><br>1 to 2 hours, and this may happen more than once.                                                                                         |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Build the bibliography</b><br>1 to 5 hours.                                                                                                                         |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Edit the paper</b><br>15 to 30 minutes per page. A 40-page draft is 10 to 20 hours.                                                                                 |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Write the cover letter</b><br>2 hours. <b>Journals differ, and the letter matters.</b>                                                                              |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Submit</b><br>20 minutes.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>13</b> | <b>If accepted — revise to the reviewers' notes</b><br>1 hour to many.                                                                                                 |
| <b>14</b> | <b>If not accepted — revise the cover letter and submit to the next journal on your list</b><br>1 hour. Then back to step 13 if it is accepted.                        |

## Is it worth it?

**The steps above should give you an idea of the effort involved.** The reviewers at major journals are serious academics at senior institutions, and they have to be convinced.

**If you want a serious academic career, or consulting work that rests on published standing, this is worth doing properly.**

**If it is to reach a specific marker for promotion, or it is a vanity project, it is worth rethinking.** Do the cost-benefit honestly, against your actual goals.

**And ask how much of it you can do yourself.** That saves money, and it costs time — which is the trade nobody sets out clearly enough.

## A note on AI

**These tools help with some of this and damage other parts of it.** They are useful for organizing notes, reformatting citations, and producing a first-pass outline. **They also delete true material, replace specific claims with vague ones, and reproduce their own earlier work worse than the first time — with no error, no flag, and**

**nothing visible on the page.**

**Nine documented cases, with the text before and after, are at [morethananeditor.com/aifailures](https://morethananeditor.com/aifailures). If the paper carries your name, somebody who is not a machine has to read every line of it.**

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