



How to pitch a Review idea

Do you have a good idea for a Review article? Here is a brief guide on how to pitch ideas to editors.

There is no formula for the perfect review-type article. But when editors think about what to commission, we ask three questions: Why this topic? Why this author? And why now? Answering these questions doesn't guarantee that an article will succeed, but missing any of them is likely to lead to failure — no one wants to read an article on a trivial topic, by someone without relevant experience, and that's five years out of date.

Although the majority of the content we publish is invited by the editors, we do also consider proposals, and we use the same three questions to assess them. So if you want to pitch an article, a good enquiry letter is essential. Here are some tips on how to write it.

First, when should you make your enquiry? We are more than willing to consider completed manuscripts. But considering how much work is involved in writing a Review article, and the fact that we may well suggest changes from your original scope, focus or structure, it makes sense to start your conversation with us before you start writing. If you do have a completed manuscript in hand, the tips we give here apply just as well to the cover letter for your submission. You can send pitches and submissions to us on our online [manuscript tracking system](#).

How should you start the letter? Where possible, you should address your letter to the editor who handles your area of research: the [biographies of our editors](#) are on the journal website, if you don't know who this is. You should introduce yourself very briefly; if you've previously had contact with one of the editors, such as chatting at a conference, you should mention it here. You should also make it clear what you are proposing.

The most important part of your letter is the explanation of why your proposed topic merits a review article. You should keep this discussion concise, but bring solid arguments to make your case. Please don't name-drop (“We ran our idea past Professor Bigshot, and they think it's brilliant”) or include hype, clichés or empty statements. A good topic will make us think “What a great idea!” based on its own merits. Your proposed article should provide insight, perhaps by showing how recent

findings open up a new field or give a new angle on an existing field, or bring together two or more disparate areas of research. You should mention any recent meetings that show the interest of the community in the topic, or related developments in the field, such as projects, facilities or collaborations.

Your topic should not have been covered recently in the journal (you can search the journal archives from the [homepage](#)). When we consider your proposal, we also look for competing articles in other journals, so you should explain how they are different to your idea — does your proposal take a different angle, cover more recent advances, or focus on techniques rather than results, or vice versa?

The question of ‘why now?’ is also important. Why write your proposed piece now and not two years ago or in two years' time? We don't ask for a comprehensive literature analysis, but you should highlight some key papers that show that people are interested in your topic, and that the interest is likely to grow and not die out in the coming years.

To answer ‘why this author?’, you should introduce yourself in a bit more detail. Are you a ‘key opinion leader’ and have an established research background in the field? Why will people want to hear what you have to say? What new angle are you bringing? If you are a team of authors, how do you complement each other?

Finally, you should explain why you are pitching to us, and not another journal. We want to know that you have thought about our [article types](#) and target audience, and that these are suitable for your article. You should also mention when you would be able to complete the article by, and ask us any questions you may have.

Even if you covered everything above, we might still decline your proposal because we already have commissioned on the same topic, but that is not a reason not to start a conversation with us — something else might come out. We hope these tips help de-mystify the process of pitching, and help you shape your idea into the best possible article.