

Preparing to presubmit

Thinking of submitting to *Nature Energy*, but have a few questions about your manuscript? Maybe a presubmission inquiry can answer them.

The decision of where to submit your work is often a difficult one that can require a significant time investment. At *Nature Energy*, we also recognize that as a fairly young journal with a broad scope and an interest in multi- and interdisciplinary research, it isn't always clear whether or not we might be interested in considering your latest work. To try and reduce some of the burden of decision-making while you're drafting a manuscript, we included 'presubmission inquiries' in our manuscript system back when we first launched and they continue to be a popular option with many authors.

While there is information on our [website](#), it isn't always clear what makes for a good presubmission inquiry or what kind of feedback may be provided having made one. In a bid to improve this situation, we offer some guidance on when and how to make a presubmission inquiry.

First off, it's important to note that not all Nature Research journals offer presubmission inquiries. The advice here applies to *Nature Energy* and is based on our experience and practices. If you're wondering about making a presubmission inquiry to another journal in the Nature family, please check their website to see if they offer this facility.

It's also important to stress that a presubmission inquiry is not a prerequisite for submission. Your chances of getting published aren't necessarily affected by having first made an inquiry: if we suggest that you submit the full manuscript then we may still pass on it without review; if we aren't sure it's worthwhile submitting then you can still submit anyway if you feel we missed or overlooked something, or that the inquiry wasn't giving a sufficiently rounded picture.

At *Nature Energy* we see presubmission inquiries in two distinct categories: those for primary research (Articles and Analyses) and those for synthesis and opinion pieces (Review Articles, Perspectives and Comments). More information about all these content types can be found on our [website](#). The structure of the inquiry and the feedback we can give on it differs in the two cases.

For primary research content, we ask that you provide us with the current working title of your study, a statement of what you consider to be the key interest of your work for your community and for a wider audience, and a summary paragraph of the findings and contribution, citing relevant literature. It can also be a good idea to outline the methods used — especially if they are an important element of the study — and the wider implications of the results. You can provide all or some of the draft figures as well, if they help to tell the story.

As presubmission inquiries are intended to be a fairly informal process for manuscripts that are still in preparation, our aim is to provide rapid feedback on whether the work is within our scope and is of potential interest to us. In practice, we can give clearer feedback on the former than the latter — as the inquiry won't contain all the details or context of the work, we can never give a precise prediction of what our decision would be on the full manuscript.

In terms of scope, it's worth bearing in mind that if your work is on an energy technology, or the energy system more broadly, then it's almost certainly within our scope; this is also likely to be true if you've seen comparable work in *Nature Energy* before. In such cases, we would suggest you go ahead and submit your work for a full assessment rather than undertake an inquiry. However, if you haven't seen similar work in the journal, it may well be because we just haven't published anything on the topic yet. In such cases, if you're in doubt, a presubmission inquiry may be useful.

The inquiry process is also an opportunity to ask specific questions. If you are submitting an inquiry because you are unsure about something, ask us about it directly. This could range from whether particular types of data or demonstration are required or should be made available at submission, to queries about sample size, journal policies, conference proceedings or organizational reports related to the results — whatever you would appreciate guidance on before completing your draft.

If you want to pitch a Comment, Perspective or Review Article, presubmission inquiries can be far more

useful than they are for primary research papers. We publish a much smaller number of these content types than Articles or Analyses and we actively commission the vast majority of them. As such, we must choose very carefully among those proposals that come in unsolicited.

In these cases, we prefer to receive a synopsis rather than the type of summary described above for research papers. This synopsis should explain the general motivation and timeliness of the piece (no more than ~300 words) along with a skeleton outline that lists the sections it will contain and their key arguments in one or two sentences. The synopsis should provide a provisional list of figures and tables, and a sample of key references (no more than 15) that illustrate the timeliness and significance of what you would like to write.

In this way, the synopsis should outline your arguments, a brief summary of their evidence and why your contribution is important for your field; more weight should be devoted to these aspects than to describing the issues that motivate the need for such a piece. It should allow us to assess not just the potential interest for our audience but also the structure's strengths and weaknesses. Comments, Perspectives and Reviews are a big undertaking for all concerned and we find this approach allows us to better assess the potential of the piece and provide feedback, before the heavy lifting of a draft begins.

Finally, if you have already written a manuscript and don't want advice beyond whether or not we'd like to publish the work, we suggest that you make a full submission rather than an inquiry. A complete manuscript should not be submitted as a presubmission inquiry — it's better we give it the attention it deserves as a full submission instead.

While there's no need to submit a presubmission inquiry to us in most cases — although we certainly don't wish to put potential authors off of making one — we hope this provides some clarity over the process and makes it more productive. □

Published online: 15 May 2019
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-019-0401-7>