

How can I get published?

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The first item to consider, if you haven't already written a paper that you're going to submit, is picking a topic. If you are looking to get published, I suggest you pick a relevant one. A Google search for "call for papers," or "call for articles" should provide you with plenty of topics that journals are interested in publishing. For my most recent article, I initially planned to write about trade export controls, but noticed an article that discussed these controls in connection to artificial intelligence technology. I searched for journals interested in artificial intelligence and was greeted with a tsunami of requests for articles on that the subject. I now had a topic that was not only relevant to my coursework, but was also something that would catch the eye of an editor.

Once you have the article written, I suggest doing some extra editing and rewriting. The famous basketball star, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who is also a prolific writer, was in town recently giving a writing workshop. When asked about the most important part of the writing process, and it is indeed a process, he said that it was the rewriting. It's important to go back and reread all of, and rewrite parts of your article. For me, I find that rereading my work in reverse, paragraph by paragraph from the bottom up, helps eliminate obvious grammatical errors that I may gloss over in my head. Obviously, this is going to take some extra time, but will be worth it because your future editors will not catch everything. It also might be helpful to get some feedback from some of your professors that may be interested in the article.

Next, you'll want to set up an account with ExpressO/Bepress (it's free). This is a platform that allows you to submit your article to various law reviews and journals. Once you have established your account, you can upload a PDF of your article and start searching journals that may fit the topic about which you have written. The key periods for article submission are January/February and August/September. For my article, I selected a bunch of law and technology journals, as well as journals that dealt with international and business law. Some journals do not take submissions from students and others will only take submissions of student papers from their own school, so you must make sure to rule those ones out. At the moment, submission costs on ExpressO through USD are inexpensive, so submit widely. You might also consider setting up an account with Scholastica which includes a wide-variety of non-law journals. For my article, I initially selected 13 journals, but after not hearing back for a few weeks, I submitted to 39 more. All of the hard work paid off when I got my first offer.

Now, when you get your first offer you are not obliged to take it. You can check the Washington and Lee law review rankings and, if you get multiple offers, select the journals that is ranked higher. You can also stagger your submissions to the top journals first, and then, if you don't hear back, submit to some of the lesser known journals. For me, I was happy to accept the offer that I received and move forward with the publication process. Because most journals are on a relatively tight timeline with their publication schedules, you will likely have a small window of time to accept or reject the offer. The journal editor will likely send you an email, but may also need to accept the offer on the ExpressO website, which is as easy as clicking the accept button, and will have the closing date for the offer.

Once you have accepted the offer, you will receive a publication contract. Typically, these contracts allow you to keep the copyright to your material, but may require their permission if you seek to republish the article in a different format within a certain time period. After you send back the contract, the editor will send you an editing schedule. The schedule will likely consist of two rounds of edits, most of which is cite-checking so you will not have to do more rewriting. The contract also will allow you to post a pre-publication copy of your article on an open-source platform like SSRN. Setting up your own page on SSRN is free and can also help your article get greater visibility. Uploading your article to SSRN will allow other scholars to read it and be included into eJournals that have similar subject matter.

Finally, don't take it too hard if you don't get an offer on your first paper. Often times, the feedback that you get can be incredibly helpful for your future writing. I submitted a paper that I had wrote the semester prior to the Washington Quarterly who, although they did not agree to publish my paper, gave me some very valuable advice on what types of topics they look to publish for future reference. However, more important than this tip was the confidence that they gave me, in letting me know that I did have the ability to get published.

In the end, it does take some extra work, but the submission process is inexpensively priced for students. The potential rewards are not just adding a great bullet point to your resume, but participating in the marketplace of ideas, and even being able to search yourself in Westlaw or Lexis Advance.