



## Book Review

### Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success (2nd Edition)

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Belcher, W. L. (2019) *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success* (2nd edn). London: University of Chicago Press Ltd.

ISBN – 13: 978-0 226-49991 –9 (paper) ISBN – 13: 978-0 226-50008 –9 (e-book)

**Keywords:** academic writing; publishing; journals; planning; guidance

This book was sent to me by an experienced journal article writer and colleague, with the encouragement that it would guide me towards publishing my first academic article and open the door to academic scholarship. I had been writing reports and seminar presentations on my professional practice for some time but had never managed to step into academic journal writing. Belcher's book has proved to be a turning point. From the introduction, the approach is inclusive, demystifying the rules, levelling the playing field and encouraging scholars on the fringes to engage in academic journal article publication. This inclusive approach is reflected in the collaborative backdrop of the book - Belcher celebrates it as a product of hundreds of scholarly writers and shaped by feedback from readers – witness this live through Belcher's Twitter account (@WendyLBelcher). The style is pragmatic, non-nonsense, and encouraging, it unflinchingly focuses on you as the writer and on the development of your journal article.

The book is structured around twelve chapters, one for each of the twelve weeks mentioned in the title. Every aspect of writing your journal article is explored in detail, from defining your argument in Week 2 to analysing your evidence in Week 6 and editing your draft in Week 11. Each chapter includes the potential pitfalls you face, advice from the author and tasks and worksheets for you to complete. Regular prompts to reflect, refine and record your thoughts are offered, alongside ideas and plans to guide your writing journey as you refine your argument and draft your article. Planning grids and many of the worksheets are freely available online at <https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/writing-your-journal-article-in-twelve/>. Throughout the instructions are clear, detailed and firm; the 'avoiding pitfalls' approach helping you to stay on track, stay focused and save time.

At its core, the book is about developing the habit of academic writing. For Belcher, developing this habit of writing is valuable because "it's not ideas that generate writing but writing that generates ideas. Writing is not a task to be completed after you figure everything out, it itself is thinking" (2019, p.390). This explains the focus on writing tasks throughout the book's weekly structure as, step by step you, are encouraged to develop your habit of writing.

A word of caution, however, the 'twelve weeks' of the title is enticing but there are no quick wins – even if you diligently follow every step, each 'week' might take you much longer than the time suggested, and if you are beginning your writing from anywhere other than the revision of an existing piece of writing into a journal article, it is likely to take much longer than twelve weeks. Belcher acknowledges this throughout and encourages a pragmatic approach – any time spent on writing is a bonus. For those writers starting from scratch, she has provided a 'Week 0' which includes a series of 22 steps and advises that working through these steps is likely to take at least three weeks and often much longer.

For aspiring academic journal writers, I would recommend reading this last chapter and skim reading the whole book first before returning to the beginning and undertaking the writing tasks week by week. This may seem counter-intuitive as you are tempted to begin the reflective and planning activities in Week 1. However, an understanding of the holistic process and an awareness of the challenges ahead can anchor your weekly tasks, prepare you for the hurdles ahead and help you set realistic expectations to achieve academic publishing success. As I write this, I have a journal article underway and I am indebted to my colleague for sending me Belcher's book which has helped me to establish my own habit of writing, to find my way in academic writing and make progress in uncharted territory.

#### Biography

Ann Tilbury is Organisational Learning and Development Lead, Learning and Teaching Academy at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Her work focuses on professional development and educational leadership. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher

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