# A brief guide to preprints

# About this guide

This guide is of interest to you if you are looking at options for publishing a journal article or poster. The guide describes preprints, or publication before peer review. It covers the basic points to consider and identifies the advantages of this form publication.

# What is a preprint?

A preprint is a version of a research manuscript published before peer review. Typically these are published as electronic documents and made freely available on large databases - preprint servers or repositories. Publishing a preprint aims to speed up the process of disseminating research avoiding the delays caused by the publication process. Publishing research as a preprint allows you to generate a conversation around your research and gain feedback from others. Authors would normally seek to publish their research in a peer reviewed journal at a later date.

# Preprint servers

Preprint servers provide a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) to enable you to link to your work and version control to curate the different versions as you make changes to your manuscript. Early preprint servers supported specific subject domains, for example [Arxiv](http://Arxiv.org) serving the Maths, Physics and Computer Science communities. More recently open access publishers such as [PeerJ](https://peerj.com/preprints-search/) have launched preprint servers. The Open Science Framework, [OSF Preprints](https://osf.io/preprints) offers a multidisciplinary preprint server as well as providing the software to support additional subject based preprint servers. There is a list of preprint servers on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuscript_(publishing)).

# Preprints, Publishers and Research Funders

Normally journal publishers will not accept work that is published or submitted elsewhere. Journal publishers in subjects where preprints are widely used will accept research that has been previously released as a preprint. As preprints emerge as a normal part of the publishing process in new subject areas, questions about whether preprints are regarded as previously published are still being worked through. It would be prudent to check the policies of publishers who may be the ultimate publishers of your research if you choose to publish your research as a preprint.

Journal publishers encourage the publication of preprints after a paper has been accepted. This is the [Green Route to Open Access](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/an-introduction-to-open-access) publication. Publisher’s policies on preprints after publication / submission can be checked on the [SherpaRoMEO](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php) database.

In recent developments (2017) research funders [The Welcome Trust,](https://wellcome.ac.uk/news/we-now-accept-preprints-grant-applications) the [Medical Research Council](https://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/preprints/) and [others](http://asapbio.org/funder-policies) have accepted the inclusion of references to preprints in grant applications as evidence of current research activity.

# Post Publication Peer Review (PPPR)

In Post Publication Peer Review articles are published before peer review. Articles go through a basic editorial review before being made publicly available. Anyone who meets basic criteria set by the PPPR platform can peer review an article. Authors can invite peer reviewers to review their work. The names of reviewers and the reviews are publicly available with the article. Examples of publishing platforms that use PPPR are [F1000Research](http://f1000Research.com) and [ScienceOpen](https://www.scienceopen.com/). The exact process of PPPR varies on different platforms.

PPPR differs from preprints in a number of ways. 1) these platforms are operating as publishers, 2) the intention of authors is to publish the work on the PPPR platform, and 3) PPPR is an alternative publishing model, rather than an addition or modification of the traditional peer review model.

# Benefits of preprints

Preprints have a number of benefits for authors / researchers:

* they enable you to establish an early claim for your research findings;
* they signal to colleagues and other researchers your research interests and encourage collaboration and feedback;
* you can publish the outputs such as posters, protocols, papers and presentations that are not be suitable for journal publication but have informed your research journey;
* they provide evidence of your productivity;
* preprints are open access, anyone can see your preprint and they are easily shared or discoverable using web search tools such as [CORE](https://core.ac.uk) and [SHARE](https://share.osf.io/);
* preprints are the fastest way to share and disseminate your research.

# Resources

ASAPbio. 2016. What are preprints? [ [YouTube](https://youtu.be/2zMgY8Dx9co) ]

Bourne PE, et al. 2017. Ten simple rules to consider regarding preprint submission. *PLoS* *Comput Biol* 13(5): e1005473. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1005473>

Crotty, D., 2017. When is a Preprint Server Not a Preprint Server? [Blog] Scholarly Kitchen. <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/04/19/preprint-server-not-preprint-server/>