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Using preprints for rapid research dissemination: FAQs



www.ntu.ac.uk/library

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What is a preprint?

A preprint is a complete (full draft version) manuscript shared with a public audience without peer review. Preprints are often also submitted for peer review and publication in a traditional scholarly journal.

Preprints uploaded to a preprint server accelerate scholarly communication and public availability. Most preprint servers will allocate a digital object identifier (doi) to your paper, making it citable by other research papers.

Why would I post a preprint?

Journal peer review takes time and creating a preprint can be beneficial in a variety of ways.

By posting a preprint of your research results, you can clearly stake a claim (which will be time stamped and can act as a public conclusive record) to the work you've done. You will have a doi, so this version of your work will become a permanent part of the scholarly record.

Many [funders](#) e.g., Wellcome, allow researchers to cite preprints in grant applications, and many journals permit citations to preprints.

Preprints can provide greater visibility for your work; your preprint will be discoverable by major search engines such as Google Scholar and as this version of your paper is openly available so has the potential to increase readership (it is not restricted by subscription paywalls). Also, on formal publication in a journal you can link your preprint to the final published version, which could encourage new readers.

Posting a preprint provides the potential to accrue alternative metric attention scores (which can demonstrate how your research is being discussed online) and citations for the final published paper.¹

Posting a preprint also allows you to receive rapid feedback on your research, either via the platform or directly to you (if you provide contact details); this could be useful in shaping up your paper before formal journal submission.

What if my work is scooped?

Sharing a preprint could prevent scooping as preprints are time-stamped upon creation, you will have established the precedence of your work by posting one.

Which preprint server is best?

You should upload your preprint to whichever preprint server best fits your discipline and the community that you would like to reach, a directory of preprints can be found [here](#). There are some multidisciplinary options including [OSF Preprints](#). Don't be shy about asking colleagues about their experiences with preprints.

¹ Fu, D.Y. and Hughey, J.J., 2019. Meta-Research: Releasing a preprint is associated with more attention and citations for the peer-reviewed article. *Elife*, 8, p.e52646.

Can posting a preprint affect future publication?

Increasingly journals permit the posting of preprints (and many encourage it) without it affecting future publication. To check what is permitted by your intended publication venue check [Sherpa/Romeo](#) (under submitted version). Be aware they may stipulate the use of specific preprint servers and are likely to have conditions around licensing and linking to the published version.

Submitted Version

None CC BY PMC

Any Website, Journal Website, +3

OA Publishing This pathway includes Open Access publishing

Embargo No Embargo

Licence CC BY

Copyright Owner Authors

Publisher Deposit PubMed Central

Location

- Any Website
- Institutional Repository
- Named Repository (PubMed Central)
- Subject Repository
- Journal Website

Conditions

- Hosting site must incorporate publisher-supplied amendments or retractions issued
- Published source must be acknowledged
- Must link to published article with DOI

You should also check open access self-archiving policies in the 'For authors' section on journal webpages or request help from the [Library Research Team](#). Where journals do not provide clear guidance² you should contact journal editors for advice prior to submitting to a preprint server.

How do I control how my preprint is used?

It is advisable that you select an appropriate [Creative Commons](#) license; your choice of CC-license will affect how the preprint may be shared and reused. If submitting to a journal, you can look the journal up on [Sherpa/Romeo](#) to see which license they recommend you use). You can get advice around licensing from the [Library Research Team](#).

Can I share my preprint on multiple preprint servers?

It is best to share your preprint on a single preprint server (ideally the one shared by your community), the open nature of these servers means your preprint should also be widely discoverable by major search engines such as Google Scholar.

² [Klebel, T., Reichmann, S., Polka, J., McDowell, G., Penfold, N., Hindle, S. and Ross-Hellauer, T., 2020. Peer review and preprint policies are unclear at most major journals. PloS one, 15\(10\), p.e0239518.](#)

How can I be sure that my preprint is discoverable by Google Scholar?

There can be a delay in Google Scholar indexing preprint servers (this tends to take place at 2 monthly intervals). There are a couple of things to bear in mind to ensure indexing:

1. Always use your full name (GS does not index single author names)
2. Ensure that you have capitalised the first letter of each part of your name e.g., Albert Einstein (if an author's name is all lowercase, it will be read as an error by GS).

What steps are required to submit my preprint?

1. Ensure your paper is exactly how you want it to appear
 - Is it ready to upload in an easily accessible file?
 - Have you removed any personal information or notes that you don't want to make public?
2. [Determine the discipline that best fits your preprint](#)
3. [Decide if you want to add a license your preprint](#)
4. Write your abstract, and make sure that it's at least 20 characters long.
5. Discuss with your co-authors that you want to share your paper as a preprint and determine the order in which the names should appear.
6. Decide if you want to allow readers to comment within the server and/or provide feedback directly (you must provide your contact details for this).

Do I need to add details of my preprint to IRep (via Worktribe)?

No, currently IRep only includes formally published papers. Details of adding papers to IRep are available [here](#).

For further advice and support please contact the

[Library Research Team](#)