

10 Tips for turning a dissertation into a journal article for LIRIC

Writing a journal article might be a new learning experience and an opportunity to share your knowledge with a wider audience: it might also be a step towards further self-development and/or career enhancement. Many of you who have completed a dissertation will have left your learning institutions and no longer have the support of a tutor or supervisor: you are on your own. You will have been reading journal papers to inform your research process generally, critiquing them and their content, perhaps to use for your literature review. Now you can begin to read them with a different purpose in mind: to see how they are done. Ask yourself: does this paper engage me; interest me; inform me; does it move me emotionally and stimulate my thinking; do I want to go on reading it after the first few paragraphs; if not why not? What would I have preferred the author to have done more of or less of? How did this person organise this paper? Does it work for me?

1. **Timing:** When to begin? The best time to think about turning your dissertation into a journal article is usually once your final amendments have been made and your dissertation has been passed, while it is still fresh in your mind. Sometimes people can feel quite bereft after completing work that has entailed a powerful experience of personal growth and new learning – others might simply need to have a break and go and plant potatoes in their allotments, take a holiday, or have a nervous breakdown – and come back to it later, once they've rested.
2. **Appropriate journal focus and style:** For those of you reading this you have a particular journal in mind – LIRIC. So go to the webpage in Lapidus and read the focus and scope of this journal and any additional information available. You will also need to read the information about the LIRIC house style in the [Submission Guidelines](#) e.g what method of referencing and font size should I use?
3. **Audience:** You might have a burning need to let the wider world know about what you have learned from your research. Ask yourself: who are the people I *most* want to inform? What aspect(s) of my dissertation do I want share with this particular readership? Are there different aspects of my work that would be valuable to other journals?
4. **Size and scope:** How do I design my paper to convey the most important aspect(s) of my dissertation for this particular audience? How does a journal article design differ from a dissertation design? Masters dissertations are usually around 10,000 - 12,000 words – doctoral theses are often 50,000-70,000 words. LIRIC journal articles should not exceed 8,000 words, including references. So your design needs to take this into consideration: immediately you can see the detail has to be greatly reduced and the focus kept sharp.
5. **What to leave out? :** The most often asked question is how on earth do I reduce this wonderful dissertation without losing its value? Dissertations are usually written in order to meet educational purposes and submitted to examiners who evaluate if it meets the standards and requirements for a degree. This entails writing lengthy and exhaustive literature reviews, detailed descriptions of methodologies you've used and often those you haven't used! And much more besides. Journal articles are read by busy practitioners and

academics looking for new and practical ideas. So it's important to keep you audience in mind.

6. **What to put in:** So what should go into my journal article? Throughout the paper you should hold the submission guidelines in mind, noting that LIRIC encourages you to write in your own voice, using 'I' rather than the impersonal 'the author', (Finlay 2020; Finlay and Gough, 2003; Etherington, 2004), using critical reflexivity and personal experience (Etherington, 2016).
7. **Ethics:** early in the paper you will need to address the ethical issues involved in the work, including a clear statement about how those issues have been addressed.
8. **So what?** You are also encouraged to explore the relevance to, or implications for, practice. Most readers will go straight to your abstract and the last few paragraphs to find out what might be of use to them before deciding to spend time reading the whole article.
9. **Abstract, introduction and context:** read abstracts in a journal of your choice and decide which ones give you an accurate sense of what's to come, and why you should spend time on this article. Your paper should include an introduction to contextualise yourself, your research, the focus of your paper and what you wanted to know and why. The introduction might also include some of the literature that has informed your work, with further references to literature interwoven at appropriate points throughout the main text of the paper. It should include the methods you have used to gain new knowledge and a concise statement of what you have found – and the particular aspect you are highlighting in this paper. A discussion usually follows and the papers ends with a summarising of the process and reflections on learning gained, drawing attention also to further questions the work has raised for you or others that could be researched in the future.
10. **Reviews and decisions from reviewers:** What happens once I've submitted? The [LIRIC checklist](#) will explain what happens to your paper once you have submitted it.

Etherington, K (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using our selves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley. ISBN1-84310-259-5: 284 pages.

Etherington, K. (2016). Personal experience and critical reflexivity in counselling and psychotherapy research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, doi: 10.1002/capr.12080.

Finlay, L. (2020). How to write a journal article: Top tips for the novice writer. *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 10, pp. 28-40.

Finlay, L. and Gough. B. (eds.) (2003) *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social science*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.