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## Preparing Manuscripts for Online Submission

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## Preparing Manuscripts for Online Submission\*

### Basic Information and Avoidance of Common Pitfalls

Stephen J. Welch

**Objectives:** After reading this article, users will be able to do the following:

- Understand the requirements of online submission of manuscripts;
- Prepare manuscript, figure, and table files to optimize digital formats;
- Avoid common pitfalls encountered in online submission processes; and
- Speed the processing and review time. (CHEST 2006; 129:822–825)

Welcome to the first installment of “Medical Writing Tips of the Month,” a new section of *CHEST* intended to assist researchers and authors with various aspects of writing and communicating in the field of medical research. For more information about this new section, please read the editorial by J. Patrick Barron, BA, in this issue of *CHEST*.<sup>1</sup>

In September 2004, *CHEST* moved to online manuscript submission and peer review using a widely used service called “Manuscript Central.”<sup>2</sup> This move heralded a number of changes for *CHEST*, including the transition from the former paper-based submission system, purging and updating our massive reviewer database, and a relaunch of the journal under a new Editor in Chief.<sup>3,4</sup>

Moving to an online system was not new in our field; in fact, most of the other journals in our field had already moved to online systems, and we chose the system already in use by many other journals in

the respiratory, critical care, and sleep fields. The decision was based on our view of the best system for us as a publisher, as well as the best system for our authors and peer reviewers.

Although many journals use Manuscript Central, every journal has its own unique workflow, editorial requirements, and policies. Therefore, the submission process for each journal will be somewhat different. Online systems like Manuscript Central are customized for each journal. It is important to note that even though this article discusses the system that *CHEST* uses (Manuscript Central), there are a number of other manuscript submission and peer review systems on the market that are being used by thousands of journals. Although each one is unique in its operation, the basic concepts behind how they work are fairly similar. Another important observation: some of the information and process steps discussed in this article are outlined online in the *CHEST* “Instructions to Authors,”<sup>5</sup> as are several online tutorials and instructions for Manuscript Central.<sup>4</sup> We encourage all users to thoroughly familiarize themselves with these instructions and tutorials. By correctly submitting your manuscript, you will minimize the chances of delays in the peer review process. We encourage authors to contact the *CHEST* Editorial Office with any questions and to utilize the online technical support resources of the system. Contact information for the *CHEST* Edito-

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rial Office and for technical support can be found within the *CHEST* Manuscript Central system.

The system itself walks the user through the process step by step. However, for the benefit of authors who have not yet submitted using an online system, the basic steps are touched on as follows.

#### GETTING STARTED WITH ONLINE MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

The first thing to do is to launch your Web browser and go to the *CHEST* Manuscript Central home page<sup>2</sup> (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/CHEST>). You have to log in (if you already have an account in the system) or click the "Create Account" option if you are a first-time user of *CHEST* Manuscript Central. If you are creating a new account, enter your name and e-mail information. Your e-mail information is very important, so be sure you have entered it correctly. We need an accurate e-mail address in order to communicate with you effectively and expeditiously. If your e-mail address ever changes, you must log in to Manuscript Central and update it. It is also important to double-check your typing to make sure there are no mistakes or typographic errors in the address. This is a common problem worth mentioning because users sometimes make mistakes when entering e-mail addresses, which makes communication impossible.

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

You may begin submission and complete all steps at one sitting or return to complete the process at a later time (however, it is important to finish the steps in each screen you are in; for security reasons, the system will log out if no activity takes place in Manuscript Central after 75 min, and any work that is left unfinished in a screen will be lost). You will need the following materials to complete the process; you may want to be sure that you have them available before you start.

##### Text

You will need word-processing file(s) for uploading to the system (Microsoft Word preferred).

- Authors may submit a single word-processing file with all material except figures. It is VERY important that figures be submitted as additional files, not imbedded into the text file or Word document.
- Authors may elect to submit each table as a separate file but are not required to do so.
- Please submit figure legends as part of the word-processing file.

- Please add page numbers and use the Page Setup option in your word-processing program to add line numbers continuously throughout the document.
- Please do not submit .pdf files for manuscript text, tables, or graphics. The Manuscript Central system will not process them correctly.

##### Figures

A separate graphics file should be submitted containing each figure. A figure with multiple parts (*eg*, top and bottom, or parts A, B, and C, etc) should be combined and submitted as a single figure rather than have the various parts submitted separately. If you have questions about submitting figures, please contact the *CHEST* Editorial Office.

Digital files that are acceptable for production (see below) must be provided for all illustrations at the submission stage.

Acceptable file formats for graphics files are .tiff, .jpg, and PowerPoint (.ppt).

A good rule of thumb is that the higher the resolution, the better your figure will look in print. Acceptable resolutions are:

- 1200 dpi for line art (*eg*, graphs or drawings that have no gray tones);
- 300 dpi for black-and-white and color photographs with no labeling; and
- 600 dpi for combination figures (*ie*, photographs with labeling).

Please do not submit compressed (zipped) files to *CHEST* Manuscript Central. They will not properly convert.

Please do not submit legends as part of the figure file; they should be part of the text file. Please double-check to make sure that figure legends match up with the correct figures, and that all figures have been submitted.

##### Web-Only/Supplementary Material

*CHEST* online (<http://www.chestjournal.org>) can accept supplementary (Web component) material. This material must be peer reviewed. Please include any such files with the manuscript. Be sure to note in your cover letter that Web-only material is included. Please contact the *CHEST* Editorial Office for acceptable formats of Web-only material.

##### Coauthor Information

A list of any additional authors, their institutions, and their e-mail addresses should be submitted. Any

change in authorship occurring after submission must be approved in writing by all authors of a manuscript. There is also a copyright transfer form that must be downloaded, signed by all authors, and faxed to the *CHEST* Editorial Office.

### *Reviewer Preference Information*

*CHEST* encourages authors to submit the names of preferred reviewers (the more the better) and nonpreferred reviewers. You must provide the e-mail addresses for any suggested names. The Editor in Chief will make the final decision of whether or not to use them, but we especially urge authors to provide us with recommendations of qualified people in the field who can serve as potentially qualified reviewers. There is a perception that people will only select their friends and that such selections will assist them with getting their manuscript reviewed favorably, but in our experience that is not the case. Sometimes the people suggested provide the most rigorous and thorough reviews.

### *Cover Materials*

Manuscript Central provides a form field for submitting cover letters and/or comments to the Editor in Chief, but cover letters or other material can also be submitted as attachments. Authors should have all such material ready before submitting. We encourage all authors to submit a cover letter because it will allow you to provide the Editor in Chief with the rationale for your work and why you think it is important and appropriate for *CHEST*.

## SUBMITTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

After you have logged in, click the “Submit a Manuscript” link in the menu bar.

Note: Please read the “Instructions to Authors”<sup>5</sup> and any online tutorials<sup>6</sup> carefully before you begin the submission process. Enter data and answer questions as prompted. Below are some additional guidelines for specific steps in the process.

### *Manuscript Type vs Section*

One of the first selections you will make is Manuscript Type: The choices are Editorial, Manuscript, Supplement, and Correspondence. In most cases, select “Manuscript” (unless your submission is an invited Editorial, or a letter to the editor [Correspondence]); *CHEST* will determine which of the new sections<sup>4</sup> is appropriate for your manuscript once it is submitted. You may indicate your preference for a particular section in your cover letter to the Editor in Chief.

### *Word Counts and Reference Counts*

Beginning in January 2006, *CHEST* began requiring authors to limit the word counts of their abstracts and manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> The *CHEST* Editorial Office may return manuscripts without review if authors do not abide by these guidelines and request that they be revised accordingly in order to be considered for peer review.

### *Title*

At the Title, Abstract, and other places in the system, you can key in or cut and paste the information. Special characters and formatting, such as Greek symbols, superscripts, and subscripts, can be applied by using the Special Characters palette in Manuscript Central.

### *Conflict of Interest Disclosures and Institutional Review Board Approval*

*CHEST* has also added more strict and comprehensive policies regarding the disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and institutional review board (IRB) approval.<sup>4</sup> In fact, a disclosure statement and a statement regarding IRB approval are now required in all manuscripts, as described in our revised “Instructions to Authors.”<sup>5</sup> The disclosure statement should appear with the title page information, and the IRB statement should appear in the manuscript itself, or if it is a manuscript type that is not applicable for IRB approval, there should be a statement indicating this in the cover letter to the Editor in Chief.

### *Abstract*

The Abstract field is a required field in *CHEST* Manuscript Central, which means you must enter some sort of text into the field in order to continue the submission process. If you are submitting an Editorial, Correspondence, or a paper for a section that does not need an abstract, please add “N/A” in the Abstract field. Otherwise, all other article types are required to have a structured abstract (See “Abstract” under Manuscript Preparation in our “Instructions to Authors”<sup>5</sup>).

### *Key Words*

For each paper, you will be asked to select at least three key words from a defined list. Note: these key words are generic terms that will aid in the selection of the reviewers; they are not meant to be the key words from your manuscript. You must select a minimum of three terms from this list.

## Uploading Files

You will be prompted to upload your files:

- Click on the “Browse” button and locate the file on your computer.
- Select the description of the file in the drop-down menu next to the “Browse” button.
- When you have selected all files you wish to upload, click the “Upload” button.

The system will create a single file from all files uploaded. The combined file will be created in the order in which files were uploaded.

NOTE: you have a limit of 100 MB combined for all files you upload. This should be more than enough file space for any manuscript submitted to *CHEST*. If for some reason your submission exceeds 100 MB, please contact the *CHEST* Editorial Office for assistance. Also, uploading large files may take several minutes, or longer if you are uploading large graphic files. Please be patient as you wait for your files to load. If your files fail to load or do not load in the allotted time, the *CHEST* Editorial Office will be happy to assist you. There are e-mail links and phone numbers for technical assistance within the Manuscript Central site.

## Proofing Manuscripts

*CHEST* Manuscript Central will create both an .html version and a .pdf version of each manuscript. The system requires that authors proof both versions, a built-in redundancy to ensure that all intended elements of the submission are present and clearly readable for the peer reviewers. You should check each of the two proofs to ensure that all elements appear, that tables are complete, that figure resolution is acceptable, and that any special characters or symbols have successfully converted to .html and .pdf.

## What To Do If You Have To Stop Your Submission

You may stop a submission at any phase and save it to submit later, but do not leave a field uncompleted; for security reasons, the system will log users out after a while if work is left unattended. Complete the screen you are on before logging off or leaving your computer unattended for an extended period of time. If you do stop submission during one of the phases, when you log in the next time, your work will be saved up to the last step you completed.

After submission, you will receive a confirmation via e-mail. You can also log in to your account in

Manuscript Central at any time to check the status of your manuscript. The *CHEST* Editorial Office will inform you via e-mail once a decision has been made.

Once you have completed this last step, you will have submitted your manuscript online.

## SUMMARY

The *CHEST* Manuscript Central online manuscript submission and peer review system<sup>2</sup> is fast and reliable. It will prompt you at each step of the process, but it is important for authors to remember the basics of having a complete manuscript text file, separate files for figures and tables, and that figures comply with the resolution formats. In addition, having accurate e-mail contact information for you and your coauthors is essential to the process; if we have problems with any aspect of your manuscript, we need to be able to contact you. Always be sure you have up-to-date and accurate contact information in the online system. And before submitting your manuscript, be sure it complies with the new policies and procedures of our revised “Instructions to Authors.”<sup>4,5</sup>

We hope this article will assist first-time submitters as well as those needing a refresher in the process. We also hope that future installments of this new *CHEST* section will assist authors with many aspects of manuscript development and medical writing such as study planning, grant writing, research, data collection and statistical review, manuscript writing and preparation, submission, peer review, and many other relevant topics. We encourage your feedback about this in future installments, as well as your ideas about topics you would like to see us address in this section. Thank you!

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