

# Manuscript Readiness

*A pre-submission system for researchers publishing in English*

Before checking a single gate, build the **Journal Profile**. Most readiness decisions — structure, word count, citation style, what goes on the title page — are set by the target journal, not by general rule. Fill this in first, from the journal's own author guidelines, then check everything else against it. The journal's rule always overrides the general one.

## BLANK TEMPLATE — COMPLETE PER JOURNAL

FIT & IDENTITY	
Journal name	...
In scope? (aims & scope)	...
Article type / word limit	...
STRUCTURE	
Section format (IMRaD?)	...
Abstract (structured?)	...
Significance statement?	...
MECHANICS	
Reference style + edition	...
Spelling (US / UK)	...
Figure / table limits	...
SUBMISSION EXTRAS	
Blinding (anonymize?)	...
Title page separate?	...
Cover letter / ORCID / data	...

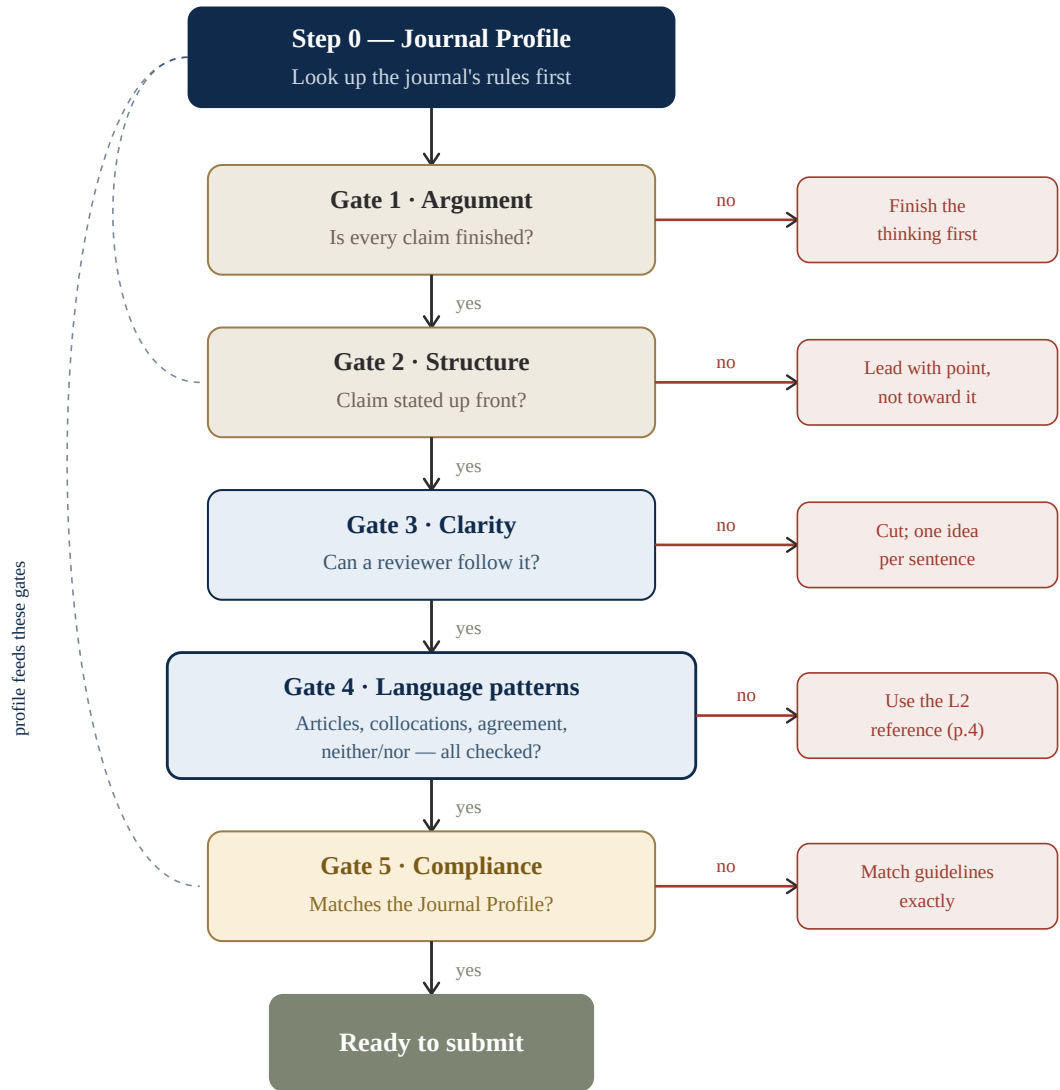
## WORKED EXAMPLE — PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY (SPRINGER)

FIT & IDENTITY	
Journal name	<i>Pastoral Psychology</i> · ISSN 1573-6679
In scope?	Psychology of religion, pastoral care — check aims
Article type / word limit	Regular article — confirm current limit
STRUCTURE	
Section format	Standard scholarly; IMRaD-compatible
Abstract	Unstructured, with keywords
Significance statement?	Not required
MECHANICS	
Reference style + edition	Strict APA — journal cites <b>6th ed.</b> (verify)
Spelling	Consistent throughout (US typical)
Figure / table limits	Arabic numerals, cited in order
SUBMISSION EXTRAS	
Blinding	Confirm blind policy for this title
Title page separate?	Typically yes (Springer psychology)
Model	Hybrid — subscription or OA (APC)

**Why the profile comes first.** *Pastoral Psychology's* guidelines reference the APA **6th edition** (2009), not the 7th. Under the 6th, "Retrieved from" before a URL is *correct* — the opposite of the current general rule. You would only catch this by reading the journal's own page. When the journal and the general rule disagree, the journal wins. Verify the live edition with the editor before submitting.

# One gate at a time, in order

Work top to bottom. Each gate is a yes/no question; a “no” sends you to the fix on the right, then back. The order is deliberate — a language pass on an unfinished argument is wasted effort.



## The five gates, explained

A failed gate is not a verdict on the research. It is a routing signal — it tells you which pass to run next, and saves you from polishing work you will later cut.

### STEP 0 Journal Profile

*What does this journal actually require?*

Read the journal's author guidelines and two or three recent articles. Record scope, structure, word limits, citation style and edition, and submission extras. Scope fit is the single largest cause of desk rejection — confirm it before anything else.

### GATE 1 Argument

*Is every claim finished?*

Each section must say what it set out to say, with no gap covered by a note-to-self or a placeholder. Clean prose cannot rescue an argument that isn't there. Finish the thinking before you touch the language.

### GATE 2 Structure

*Is the claim stated up front?*

English academic readers expect the point first, then the support. Writing that circles inward before arriving — common when shaping an argument in one's first language — slows a reviewer down. State the claim, then build it. (The Journal Profile decides IMRaD, abstract type, and section order.)

### GATE 3 Clarity

*Can a reviewer follow it easily?*

Journals reject manuscripts whose English is too dense for reviewers to follow the science. Favour short, active sentences and one idea per sentence. If a sentence needs three readings, cut it down.

### GATE 4 Language patterns

*Are the recurring patterns checked?*

The errors that most often mark second-language writing: articles (a / the), preposition collocations, subject–verb agreement across a long subject, and correlatives (neither / nor). None changes your meaning; together they cost a reviewer's goodwill. The mini-reference on page 4 lists the high-frequency cases.

### GATE 5 Compliance

*Does it match the Journal Profile?*

Mechanical, but a frequent desk-reject trigger: citation style and edition, reference formatting, spelling system, figure and table rules, blinding, and the title page. Check the manuscript against the profile you built at Step 0 — the journal's rule, not the general one.

## High-frequency patterns

The recurring corrections for researchers whose first language is Japanese. Scan your manuscript for each. The fix is recognition, not reasoning — these are fixed by convention, so learn them as units.

PATTERN	WATCH FOR	WRONG → RIGHT
<b>Articles (a / the)</b>	Japanese has no articles, so they are easy to drop or misuse. Use “the” for a specific, known item; “a/an” for one of many; no article for general plurals.	<b>data shows the clear trend</b> → the data show a clear trend
<b>Preposition collocations</b>	Some words bind to one preposition by convention. There is no logic to derive — memorize the pair.	<b>affiliated to · consistent to</b> → affiliated with · consistent with
<b>Correlatives</b>	Fixed pairs: either/or, neither/nor, both/and, not only/but also. The first half sets the partner.	<b>neither clear or useful</b> → neither clear nor useful
<b>Agreement across a gap</b>	The verb agrees with the head noun, not the nearest one. In “one of the X that ...,” the head is “one.”	<b>the list of changes were sent</b> → the list of changes was sent
<b>Verb complementation</b>	The head word selects what follows. “Challenge of + -ing”; “reduce X to Y,” never “as.”	<b>the challenge to maintain</b> → the challenge of maintaining
<b>Dangling modifiers</b>	An opening -ing phrase attaches to the next noun. Give it a subject that can act. (Considering, judging, assuming are accepted exceptions.)	<b>While analyzing data, patterns emerged</b> → While analyzing the data, we saw patterns emerge
<b>Comma splice</b>	Two full sentences need a semicolon, a period, or a comma + conjunction — not a bare comma.	<b>the tool was popular, few used it</b> → the tool was popular, but few used it
<b>Parallelism</b>	List items must share one grammatical form.	<b>replying, keeping, to be visible</b> → replying, keeping, being visible
<b>Consistency</b>	Hold one spelling system throughout; en dash for paired terms. Citation edition follows the Journal Profile.	<b>organisation ...</b> <b>organization</b> → organization ... organization

**Order matters.** Run this reference only after Gates 1–3 pass. Polishing the language of an unfinished or unclear argument is effort you may have to undo. Finish the thinking, fix the shape, then clean the words.