28 TIPS TO GET MORE CITATIONS FOR YOUR PUBLICATIONS

By Sven Hendrix

Everybody knows that high impact factors are essential for a career in science. However, young scientists often underestimate the value of citations. They provide a more valuable estimate of the quality of a scientific publication than other metrics, including impact factors. In this article, I provide 20 strategies to increase your citation counts.

1. Do Innovative and Well-Performed Research

Sorry to start with such self-evident advice. It is obvious – lousy research will not bring you citations. By producing high-quality work that is innovative, impactful, and relevant to the field, researchers attract attention and recognition from their peers. Ultimately, the best strategy for getting more citations is to produce work that is both excellent and relevant to the field and to promote it through various channels to maximize its impact and reach.

2. Publish in High-Impact Journals

Unsurprisingly, the most effective way to get more citations is to publish your work in high-impact journals. Those have a wide readership and a strong reputation in the field. These journals typically have high citation rates and attract influential researchers and scholars who are more likely to cite your work if they find it relevant and exciting. Therefore, it's worth investing time and effort to strategically increase the impact factor of your paper.

It may be tempting to aim for multiple co-authorships on high-impact papers. However, your colleagues will question your scientific independence when you have only high-ranking co-authorships but no first authorships. Read more here: Should I aim for co-authorships on high-impact papers?

3. Publish Only in a Peer-Reviewed Journal

In another article, I have critically discussed whether you should aim for multiple co-authorships to extend your publication list. The answer is complex. However, **the golden rule is to avoid publishing in predatory journals at all costs! Because it ruins your career in science.** Research articles in predatory journals are typically not cited - and should not be cited!

4. Write Compelling Titles and Abstracts

Another way to attract more citations is to write compelling titles and abstracts that capture the essence and significance of your work and entice readers to read further. A well-crafted title and abstract can make your journal article stand out and increase its visibility and discoverability in online databases and search engines (you may even consider search engine optimization (SEO) - see below).

Therefore, investing time and effort in crafting these elements and testing them with colleagues and peers before the submission is vital.

5. Create compelling figures and graphical abstracts

Creating visually compelling figures and graphical abstracts can substantially enhance the impact of your scientific publications. Comprehensive and visually appealing graphical abstracts or summaries of your research paper or review will be gratefully used by your colleagues for the introductory part of presentations of their own research. Thus, others will see the slide, use it for their presentations, and cite your paper in their publications.

Furthermore, attractive graphics are easy to share on social media.

6. Use a research identifier to avoid false attribution or undetected citations

In academic research, it is crucial to establish a consistent author identity to ensure that your work is easily discoverable and correctly attributed. Use a research identifier such as an ORCID ID or a ResearcherID. They allow one to attribute a specific work or manuscript to a specific author. Otherwise, due to different author names used or different initials (see below), not all your scholarly publications may be counted as yours.

7. Always publish with a consistent form of your name

I published under three different names, and these citations are often not attributed to me as an author. Thus, my citation count is too low in some databases. Similarly, decide early in your career which initials you use systematically for your author's name – particularly if you have one of the more common names. If you have publications as "Jackson A," "Jackson AC," and "Jackson ACB," these might be counted as three different authors.

On the other hand, there are 348 publications under my name, "Hendrix S," in PubMed – but not all of these papers are authored by me – because there is a number of authors that appear in databases as Hendrix S. Thus, consider using your full name, including first and middle initials, and use this format consistently to distinguish yourself from other researchers in your field with similar names.

8. Use Pre-print Servers

Share your work on pre-print servers like arXiv, bioRxiv, or medRxiv, to increase the visibility of your work and get early feedback and potential citations.

- arXiv: Launched in 1991, one of the oldest and most well-established pre-print servers. It covers physics, mathematics, computer science, quantitative biology, and more.
- bioRxiv: Founded in 2013, a pre-print server specifically for the life sciences. It covers bioinformatics, cell biology, ecology, genetics, immunology, microbiology, neuroscience, and more.

- medRxiv,: Launched in 2019, a pre-print server dedicated to health sciences. It covers various medical research fields, including clinical trials, epidemiology, public health, and more.

Find two rather comprehensive lists of pre-print servers here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_preprint_repositories

https://asapbio.org/preprint-servers

9. Always include detailed data availability statements in your publications

Including detailed data availability statements in your publications is not only a crucial aspect of responsible and transparent research. Publications with accessible data are also more likely to be cited by other researchers, as they can easily access the data to support their own studies or to perform meta-analyses.

When you include data availability statements and deposit your data in recognized repositories, your work becomes more discoverable by other researchers searching for related data.

10. Include a research identifier in your email signature

Include a research identifier in your email signature and publications, such as an ORCID ID or a ResearcherID. This will make it easier for other researchers to find and cite your work.

11. Create a Web of Science profile

Creating a Web of Science profile does not directly lead to more citations. However, Web of Science is a valuable resource for tracking your research work and its impact. It offers advanced database search features that help you find and manage cited work and citing references more efficiently. By using these tools, you can ensure that your list of references is accurate and comprehensive.

By accessing the Web of Science database, you can generate a citation report that displays your total number of publications, the number of times a paper is cited, the average number of citations per article, and other relevant information.

If you access Web of Science, you can better understand your research output and its influence within your scientific field. You get metrics on which articles perform well, suggesting they address research topics relevant to many other researchers.

12. Create a public profile on Google Scholar

A Google Scholar profile can significantly enhance your research visibility. As a centralized platform and a reputable academic search engine, Google Scholar collects your publications and makes them easily accessible. Google Scholar citations show other researchers your impact.

Another important aspect is that its profiles are search engine friendly, boosting your work's discoverability. You increase your chance of getting cited when appearing as a top search result in Google.

Google Scholar Metrics and its citation tracking allow you to monitor your research impact, helping you identify areas for improvement or focus.

In addition, it increases your networking efforts because other researchers can follow your work, potentially leading to collaborations and professional connections.

By setting up citation alerts in Google Scholar, you can stay informed of when your work is being cited by others. This enables you to engage with fellow researchers and research communities, fostering collaborations and strengthening your network.

13. Optimize your work for search engines

This is a controversial subject. Academic purists are not enthusiastic about altmetrics and search engine optimization (SEO) because they may distract from more accepted parameters such as citations or the h-index. However, nowadays, web presence is a relevant aspect of academic visibility. In addition, publishers and journal editors are highly aware that the search engines' rank of their journals is essential for their economic success.

Thus, I would ensure that your research is optimized for search results by using relevant keywords and phrases throughout your post-publication prints, published paper, conference presentations, web sites, social media posts, or blog post. This will help make your work more discoverable and boost your chances of being cited by other researchers.

You may consider including relevant search terms and keywords in your publications commonly used in your scientific field. This may help improve your paper's chances of appearing at the top of a search engine list and increase its visibility to other researchers in Google.

14. Publish an excellent technical report

Technical reports can also receive citations, particularly when they contain valuable information or insights not found in other publications. Technical reports are typically more focused and detailed than other types of publications, making them a valuable resource for researchers seeking to delve deeper into a particular topic or problem. Additionally, technical reports are often made available through open-access channels, which can increase their visibility and accessibility to a broader audience.

15. Publish an excellent review

Writing an excellent review about a subject you know particularly well is a great way to position yourself as an expert in the field.

Review articles are often highly cited due to their breadth of coverage, making them a valuable resource for researchers seeking to understand the current state of research in a particular area.

In addition, reviews are essential references to support very general, concise statements, for example, in the introduction or discussion section of an experimental paper. As a consequence, they receive many citations.

Furthermore, you can cite your older or previously published work in your reviews. This should be part of your well-elaborated publication strategy.

Unfortunately, some colleagues publish many reviews to excessively cite themselves. This is frowned upon in the scientific community and is a bad style but, unfortunately, a common practice. As a rule of thumb, publish more original papers than reviews.

16. Publish a book chapter

Incorporating your research into a book chapter is a possibility to gain more citations for your work. Book chapters often reach a broader and more diverse audience than standalone journal articles, as they become part of a comprehensive, topic-specific resource.

However, it can also be a big waste of time. There are too many books out there that do not get read anymore since the pace of science is so fast that a book chapter is often outdated until it gets published.

Furthermore, book chapters frequently lack an impact factor and may not be featured in bibliometric databases. Consequently, they may not be considered in quantitative assessments of your output. Therefore, writing an excellent review (see above) may be more valuable for your career.

17. Publish a book

Publishing a book can significantly boost your citation count by establishing you as an expert in your field. A well-written book offers comprehensive coverage of a topic, serving as a valuable resource for other researchers, students, and professionals.

You may self-publish or collaborate with a reputable publisher to improve visibility and distribution. Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages.

However, as I argued in the tip about writing a book chapter, it can also be a big waste of time. There are too many books out there. If you do not write the essential go-to reference or the primary textbook in a field used in many universities, your book may quickly be forgotten. Thus, weigh carefully the advantages and disadvantages.

18. Cite your own work in new original articles and reviews

You get more citations by citing your own previous work in your new original articles and reviews. In addition, you create a coherent narrative that showcases the evolution of your research concepts. It shows how your ideas and findings have contributed to the broader field. In addition, citing your own work helps establish you as an authority and expert in the subject area, as it demonstrates a continued and systematic exploration of the topic.

However, self-citation may be used excessively without substantially adding to the new publication's quality. Make sure that the citation is justified and adds value.

19. Present your work at scientific conferences

Presenting your work at scientific conferences (poster, talk) can be an effective way to increase the visibility of your research and attract citations. By making connections and sharing your work with others in your field, you can generate interest in your latest research and increase the likelihood of being cited in future publications.

By attending conferences, workshops, and seminars in your field, you can meet other researchers who share your interests and can potentially cite your work or collaborate with you on future projects. Attending these events can be expensive and time-consuming. Thus, decide carefully which meeting to attend.

20. Give Guest Lectures or Seminars

Present your research as a guest lecturer or seminar speaker at universities and research institutions, which can help expose your work to new audiences and potentially increase citations.

By engaging with new audiences, you can foster stimulating discussions and collaborations and increase the likelihood of your publications being cited. It can be particularly beneficial when showcasing your research to experts in your field and to interdisciplinary groups, broadening the impact of your work.

A simple and effective networking strategy is to invite your friends and collaboration partners to give a talk at your research institution - and they invite you to their university.

21. Establish a Citation Alert

Set up citation alerts for your publications to monitor and track citations, which can help you engage with citing authors and increase your work's visibility.

Engaging with citing authors can increase your citations by fostering relationships and encouraging collaboration. When you interact with researchers who have cited your work, you demonstrate an active interest in their research and open avenues for discussing joint interests.

If you are nice, they will probably cite you again. Such an exchange can lead to collaborative projects or joint publications, further increasing your visibility in the academic community.

22. Promote Your Work on Social Media

Social media and academic networks are vital in promoting your work and attracting more citations. Share your publications and reviews on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Promoting your work on social media can be a huge waste of time without a substantial return on investment. However, with a Tweet or social media post, you can reach a broad audience and engage with other researchers who may be interested in your work.

You can also use these platforms to join groups and discussions relevant to your field. You can share your insights and expertise with others and sporadically promote your current publication there.

23. Join Online Research Communities

Participate in online research communities like ResearchGate and Academia.edu to share your publications, collaborate with others, and increase your work's visibility.

24. Press releases

Press releases are a very efficient way to share your newest publication to increase your scientific work's visibility and impact. By crafting a well-written and engaging press release, you can effectively communicate the key findings of your research to a wider audience, including journalists and academic colleagues who also consume the news. Thus, your colleagues reading about your research in a non-academic journal or newspaper increases the chance that they become aware of your research and cite your paper.

Press releases can also be picked up by other media outlets and shared across social media, further increasing the reach of your work. You should establish a good relationship with your institution's press and marketing office. Whenever you publish an excellent paper, you should ask for their support. They probably know the best place to pitch your story.

25. Help A Reporter Out (HARO)

Using Help A Reporter Out (HARO) may be an option to get more citations. HARO is a free platform that connects journalists with sources

for their stories. By signing up as a source in the "Science" category, you can receive queries from journalists looking for expert input on various scientific topics. You may be quoted in the resulting article and receive a citation for your work by providing thoughtful and insightful responses.

26. Publishing in Open-Access Journals

Publishing with open access increases the visibility and accessibility of research. Publishing in an open-access journal leads to broader dissemination and a potentially more significant impact of your work. Unsurprisingly, when research is freely available online, it is more easily discoverable and accessible to a broader audience. This includes researchers who may not have access to traditional subscription-based journals.

27. Invest in co-authorships

Investing in co-authorships is a strategic move that costs time and energy. It may broaden your research network and increase the number of your publications. But the price may be too high. It may distract you from developing scientific independence, and you may get moved to the acknowledgment section, although a co-authorship has been promised.

However, by contributing meaningfully to the studies of fellow researchers, you can earn co-authorship credit, which showcases your expertise and helps establish your reputation in the scientific community.

Analyze with care whether it is worth your time! You may focus on increasing the number of general co-authorships or co-authorships on high-impact publications. Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages. Read more here:

- Should I aim for multiple co-authorships to extend my publication list?
- Should I aim for co-authorships on high-impact papers?

28. Publish more papers

The last tip is elf-evident! When you increase your output, the chances of getting more citations is higher. To help you publish more papers, I wrote an entire article about strategies to write faster and more professionally.

Are these tips to increase citation counts accepted?

In my humble opinion, none of the tips provided here are problematic or unethical. The only exception may be the focus on altmetrics which are still seen as a distraction or misleading by more conservative scientists. However, I think the younger generations who are grown up with social media will find altmetrics completely acceptable – and the older colleagues will retire and lose influence.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are citations essential for a successful career in science?

Your citation count is one of the essential elements to qualify for an academic career because they provide evidence of the impact and relevance of your research. By increasing your visibility, fostering collaboration, and making you more attractive for academic positions and grants, citations play a crucial role in demonstrating the quality of your work.

Can citation numbers be misleading?

While citation rates are an essential tool for measuring the impact of your research, they can be misleading. For example, a high citation number does not always indicate high-quality research, and not all citations are equal. Therefore, it's crucial to evaluate citation metrics critically and consider them in context with other factors. Read more here: Which bibliometric data are relevant for a research career?

Are citations relevant for a non-academic career?

Citations are typically not so relevant for non-academic careers, as they are primarily used

in academic contexts to measure research impact and influence. However, the skills and knowledge gained from conducting research can still be valuable in a non-academic career, as they demonstrate critical thinking, attention to detail, and a commitment to excellence.

What is more critical for an academic career - citations or impact factors?

In a previous article, I argued that impact factors and citations are both crucial for a successful career in science – but for different reasons. While citation rates reflect the influence and reach of a researcher's work, impact factors represent the reputation and significance of the journal in which the research is published. Impact factors help you choose the best journal to publish your research. Read more here: Which bibliometric data are relevant for a research career?

Acknowledgments

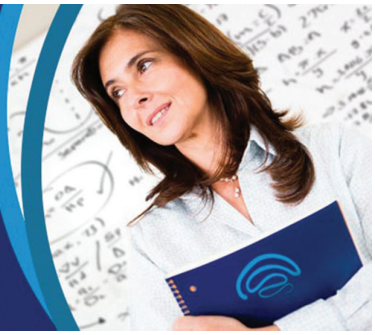
I have used AI systems, including Grammarly and ChatGPT, to enhance the English and comprehensiveness of this article. This post may contain affiliate links, meaning I get a small commission if you decide to purchase through my link. Thus, you support smartsciencecareer at no cost to you!

Recommended reading

The following articles may also interest you:

- 10 simple strategies to increase the impact factor of your publication
- How To Write Faster: 19 Efficient Ways To Finish My Publication
- Which bibliometric data are relevant for a research career?
- Should I aim for co-authorships on high-impact papers?
- Should I aim for multiple co-authorships to extend my publication list?
- Do I need nature or science papers for a successful career in science?
- Should I have senior authorships as a postdoc?
- What is the best publication strategy in science?

DO YOU WANT A SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC CAREER IN SCIENCE?

Take the course on **"How to Become a Professor"**

START HERE