Registered Report Guidance for the *Journal of Consumer Research*

Overview.

Registered Reports are empirical papers that go through a full review process prior to collecting the final data, which is then collected and analyzed, after a conditional acceptance. Registered Reports should be written similarly to typical empirical papers, proposing a theoretical or practical contribution, situating that contribution in the research literature, describing the full research and data analysis design in detail, and explaining precisely how the results will be interpreted and mapped to conclusions. Such submissions would receive a full evaluation during the review process, including potential revisions.

To be successful, a Registered Report must make a convincing case that the final paper will make a *JCR*-worthy contribution regardless of how the results turn out. For this reason, Registered Reports are most commonly used when a case can be made for a two-sided hypothesis, a test between competing theories, or the importance of a precise effect size estimate. This would not be a good format for speculative research questions, where some set of empirical outcomes would fail to be informative. Registered Report submissions do have the option of providing pilot data to establish that the conditions for a meaningful test are likely to be met. However, all data collected prior to conditional acceptance will be reported in an appendix and the final paper should be based only on data collected and analyzed as specified in the accepted draft.

While Registered Reports are expected to constitute a very small proportion of *JCR* papers, the goal is to provide authors with an additional approach that may be useful in certain circumstances. The Registered Report format compels the authors and review team to agree on what would constitute a set of valid and sufficiently informative tests of the research question up front. For this reason, the format can be particularly useful for controversial questions, preventing debates over post-hoc reinterpretations or "moving the goal posts" during the review process. The Registered Report format can likewise be helpful for situations in which no additional data can be collected (such as field experiments or large-scale multi-country studies) and in reducing authors' costs of data collection by ensuring that only data for which there is a consensus on the informativeness will be collected (i.e., as opposed to collecting initial data that may then be deemed uninformative).

Guidelines for authors

Managing contribution risk.

Registered Reports can provide a variety of advantages to authors, including feedback and agreement on methods before conducting expensive or one-shot data collection, lowering data collection costs, helping authors establish credibility for their work and avoiding post-hoc reviewer feedback. JCR benefits as well, by encouraging ambitious work and having a more efficient review process. However, there is also a potential conflict with JCR's mission to inform the field, if a Registered Report that JCR commits to publishing ultimately turns out not be informative.

As a result, a successful Registered Report needs to make the case that the paper will be informative and provide a sufficient contribution. This can be very challenging for authors to demonstrate and for reviewers to evaluate, prior to knowing the results. In keeping with JCR's positioning as a broad interdisciplinary journal and to encourage different ways of using the Registered Report format, we do not want to define a narrow formula or set of requirements. These are some strategies to consider:

- Collecting and analyzing pilot data to establish the likelihood of a hypothesized finding. Note that the pilot would generally need to have high statistical power.
- Collecting pilot data to validate stimuli, measures, manipulations or other elements of the research design to establish the likelihood of the pre-conditions for a valid test being met.
- Conducting power analysis using a (precise and well-motivated) projected effect size to estimate the likelihood of a significant effect under the assumed effect size.
- Conducting power analysis to establish the range of detectable effect sizes from the proposed study.
- Deriving predictions from prior studies, theories or models to map a set of conclusions to the full set of potential results, paying particular attention to the interpretation of "null results".
- Defining follow-up tests and a detailed decision-tree to determine how those follow-up tests are conducted.
- Defining the specific conditions under which the test would be considered informative and therefore publishable.
- Design a study that has a high built-in likelihood of informativeness (e.g., because of the large scope, the uniqueness/relevance of the data, the potential to precisely estimate an important effect size, and/or the degree to which purely descriptive information would also be informative).

It is important to emphasize that this is a list of potential strategies that will be more or less effective at addressing the challenge of "non-informativeness risk" depending on the research question and planned methods, and different papers may use very different approaches.

Writing a Registered Report.

Registered Reports proceed in two phases, a Stage 1 initial submission that is reviewed and revised and, if ultimately successful, conditionally accepted. The Stage 1 paper then serves as the "contract" for the paper, detailing how the study will be conducted, analyzed and interpreted. After data collection, the Stage 2 submission is the writeup of the paper for publication. This will also be reviewed, but only to check for consistency with the accepted Stage 1 paper, to make sure that any initially specified pre-conditions for a successful test were met, and to give feedback on exposition. The expectations for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of typical Stage 1 and Stage 2 submission components.

	Initial Stage 1 submission	**Stage 2 submission**
Theoretical development	Introduces research question, explains importance and why it has not already been answered.	Same as Stage 1
Illustrative/pilot data	[Optional] Addresses feasibility questions, motivates research question.	Briefly discussed, moved to Web Appendix
Methods: data collection	Detailed methods that (i) makes all decisions in advance and (ii) are convincing as to feasibility. Should define necessary conditions for the study implementation to be valid.	Same as Stage 1 + discussion of any deviations
Methods: research design	Detailed design that (i) clearly defines DVs and IVs, (ii) makes all decisions in advance and (iii) is convincing as to ability to answer the research question. Should define necessary conditions for the data to be informative.	Same as Stage 1 + discussion of any deviations and filling in any previously unknown information (dates, final sample size)
Analysis/Results	Detailed analysis plan that (i) clearly defines primary and secondary analyses, (ii) commits to specific interpretation in advance and (iii) is convincing as to validity and the ability of the analysis to answer the research question.	Results of all planned analyses specified in Stage 1 paper. Can be supplemented with minor additional exploratory analyses for interpreting main results if needed.
General discussion	Discusses what will be learned from the study, specifying the different conclusions that could be drawn, depending on the results (a flow chart in the web appendix may be useful).	Full discussion of results and their interpretation, limitations and boundary conditions. Should be consistent with planned interpretation in Stage 1.
Web Appendix	Key materials for evaluating the proposed data collection, research design and analysis. Should include exact wording/images for stimuli, measures, or interventions + definitions of key variables, list of primary analyses.	Study materials, pilot and planning data, additional analyses (robustness checks, etc...)
Online repository	All implementation materials, including survey/experiment stimuli, data dictionary, RA instructions, implementation plans, decision trees, power analysis, data analysis code, simulated data, etc.., where applicable.	Contains full materials, including Stage 1 conditionally accepted paper.

Stage 1 initial submission.

The core challenge facing a Registered Report in Stage 1 is to make a convincing case that, no matter what the results of the proposed test are, we will learn something that we didn't already know (i.e., something that previously there was significant uncertainty about) and that we will be able to draw conclusions and build a stronger understanding than we had before. This does not

mean that the paper should make the case that a specific finding of interest will occur – to the contrary, a successful Stage 1 proposal will make clear how each potential set of results will lead to (different) informative conclusions.

The Stage 1 submission should be written much like a regular paper, except that in place of the results section, the paper should describe the analysis and interpretation plan. In addition, the web appendix should serve as a very detailed pre-registration. Note that this should not be written in the form of a grant proposal, which is typically much more open-ended.

Key elements of the Stage 1 submission (to be addressed in the paper, web appendix or other supporting materials) include:

1. Anticipated contribution. The Stage 1 paper should make a compelling case for what the field will learn if there is also a likelihood that we will learn some additional interesting new thing.
    a. Literature review and general intended contribution. It will often be helpful for this to be a *critical* literature review, identifying the limitations, gaps or conflicts in the literature, theoretical and/or empirical, that the Registered Report are designed to address.
    b. Research question. Define the research question as precisely as possible and explain why this research question is important to answer and (sometimes despite reviewers' intuitions) it has not already been (fully, sufficiently) answered. Some questions to address:
        i. Why is the general research question important? Do the reasons why the topic is important to consumer behavior match the methodological approach?
        ii. Why isn't the question already answered? Are there conflicting findings or other reasons for uncertainty about the prior literature? Are there conflicting predictions from existing theories such that answering the question would help resolve the theoretical debate?
        iii. What do we already know from prior research, what could logically be extended from prior research, and what are the reasons why we should not just answer the research question based on prior research, but need new data?
    c. Potential answers to the question. A Registered Report will generally not provide a single directional hypothesis, but will instead test between competing hypotheses. As a result, the registered report should discuss the range of potential answers that the data could provide. Particular attention should be paid to how the less obviously informative outcomes will be interpreted and what can be learned from them. Some questions to address:
        i. What will you conclude if the result is a "null" effect? How will uninformative null effects (e.g., failure of pre-conditions for a valid test, Kane 2025) be distinguished from informative null effects? Given that every statistical null effect has a confidence interval that includes both no effect and some magnitudes of effects, what standard will be used to define meaningful differences (e.g., see Lakens et al 2018, Simonsohn 2015)?

ii. For studies based on prior research paradigms, what will you conclude if your results fail to replicate the prior research in one or more aspects? Are the studies designed in a way that will enable you to draw strong conclusions? It may be helpful to design a conditional follow-up study (or studies) to be conducted in the case that the initial study doesn't replicate the effect, in order to be able to draw stronger conclusions

iii. What will you conclude if the most subjectively predictable result occurs (e.g., a replication and straightforward generalization, or similar results across treatment conditions that were to be compared)? Can you make a theoretical and/or substantive case for why this result would be something the field would learn from? It may be helpful to design a conditional follow-up study (or studies) to be conducted in the case that such an effect is found, in order to be able to draw stronger conclusions.

2. Research methods. The Stage 1 paper should explain the methods, analyses and bases for conclusions with enough detailed that (i) the review team can fully evaluate the plan and (ii) there is as little ambiguity as possible requiring additional decisions after data collection. Note that the review team will provide the same level of scrutiny that a typical paper would get after data collection at this pre-collection stage, so sufficient detail is critical. It may also be helpful to think of the Stage 1 paper as a particularly detailed pre-registration (ideally written at sufficient specificity that all implementation details have already been made).
    a. Research design. The idea of a RR is to work out all the operational details in advance so that, if the paper is accepted, the study that is ultimately run is as informative as possible. In effect, a hyper-detailed pre-registration is needed. This should include clear definitions of the outcomes variable(s), measures or manipulations of independent variables, and any control or quality-check variables. A full draft survey or data collection instrument should be provided (in English as well as in the language in which it will be implemented, if not English).
    b. Criteria for validity. Define pre-conditions for a valid and informative test. What are the potential data collection outcomes that would render the test uninformative (e.g., criteria to determine that participants were not understanding or not attending to the survey materials)? Pilot testing could be useful for this. It may be useful to incorporate manipulation checks or a "positive control" (see OSF template cited below) in the study design.
    c. Discussion of statistical power. The paper should discuss what effect sizes will be detectable and how that fits into the conclusions. This is particularly important for dealing with the possibility of a "null" effect – an imprecise null effect that is consistent with meaningfully large effects is less informative than a more precise null that is only consistent with small effects. What data collection outcomes (e.g., lower than expected sample size or low prevalence of the behavior of interest) would render the test uninformative?
    d. Data collection procedures. A detailed description of the data collection procedure should be provided. If the data will be collected by someone outside of the review team, training materials and data verification procedures should be included. Some

cases may call for a flowchart-like map of the proposed data collection procedure, which identifies potential decisions that would need to be made during data collection and reports (as precisely as possible) how they will be made.

e. Data processing and exclusions. Describe how any composite measures (indices, scale values, etc..) will be calculated, as well as the criteria or procedures for any data exclusions or cleaning.
f. Plan for data sharing. Ideally, the paper will share full materials, logistical plans, research assistant instructions, all data (raw and processed), analysis code and analysis outputs. When feasibility constraints limit what can be shared (e.g., in a partnered field experiment), that needs to be discussed in detail in the Stage 1 proposal.

3. Analysis and interpretation. The Stage 1 paper should specify what conclusions will be drawn for each potential data outcome, and what we will learn from those conclusions in each case.
    a. Exact statistical analyses. The paper should provide a detailed discussion of data analyses, ideally including a sample data dictionary and analysis code. It could also be helpful to set up a demonstration data file, just to remove any remaining ambiguity.
    b. Interpretation of results. For each analysis, the paper should provide a list of possible outcomes and how each will be interpreted. Particular care should be taken regarding the interpretation of null effects and non-significant interactions. It is important to anticipate and provide sufficient detail to preclude potential disagreement about the interpretation once results are known. For more complex situations, some kind of flowchart or decision tree may be helpful.

Stage 2 reporting of results.

The Stage 2 paper is written after the data has been collected and analyzed. This should be written as a regular paper, with a few procedural specifics:

1. The cover letter should discuss any deviations from the methods or analyses specified in the Stage 1 paper, including both changes and any additional unplanned analyses.
2. The introduction to the paper should (briefly) explain that the paper was developed as a Registered Report.
3. The literature review, theoretical development or hypotheses should be the same as in the Stage 1 paper. If factual errors are discovered, they can be corrected, but this should be flagged for the review team (e.g., in the cover letter). The paper should not be "re-framed" to emphasize the hypotheses that were supported in the data.
4. The description of methods should discuss (i) any decisions that were made in accordance with the contingency plans in the Stage 1 paper and (ii) and deviations from the plans in the Stage 1 paper. Any Stage 1 criteria for a valid test should be discussed and the data relevant to those criteria should be reported.
5. The data analysis should follow the Stage 1 planned analyses. Necessary changes should be explained. A minimal amount of additional unplanned analyses can be reported (briefly)

but need to be explicitly discussed as exploratory and should not be the basis of the primary conclusions.

6. The general discussion should put the results into context, discuss any limitations of the evidence or boundary conditions and provide the answer to the research question. While the authors' interpretations and observations after completing the analysis are an important part of the contribution, it is very important that this is in line with the agreed upon criteria for interpretation in Stage 1. Expect reviewers to be quite skeptical about reinterpreting evidence that was considered inconsistent with a theory in Stage 1 as potentially consistent with the theory after seeing the results in Stage 2. Neither authors nor reviewers should be "moving the goal posts" at this stage.
7. Unless there has been an agreement otherwise in Stage 1, all pilot data should be moved to the web appendix.
8. The conditionally accepted Stage 1 draft should be uploaded to a publicly shared repository.

<u>Guidelines for reviewers.</u>

It is important to note that there is no "formula" for registered reports, which can differ widely in goals and methods (see the "Examples of published Registered Reports" below). As an incomplete list, some uses of Registered Reports include:

- Studies designed to precisely test between competing theories
- Confirmatory testing to test a (high plausibility) novel effect and evaluate generalizability (which may benefit from pilot testing)
- Studies comparing a broad range of interventions on the same outcome
- Field experiments or any other setting in which it would not be feasible to collect additional data later
- Analysis of secondary data that is not yet available to the authors(which may benefit from pilot analysis of a "training set")
- Broad descriptive data collection (e.g., comparisons across multiple countries)
- Replications of prior work
- Estimation of effect sizes that are sufficiently precise to be informative (particularly when tested in a way that would be a useful input for practitioners or policy makers)
- Confirmatory testing of research synthesis (e.g., to independently test the conclusions from a literature review or meta-analysis)

Stage 1 Review.

In a Stage 1 Registered Report, no data has been collected yet and the manuscript is proposing a set of studies to be run after a conditional acceptance. If the paper is conditionally accepted, ultimate publication would only depend on whether the final paper fulfills the agreed upon data collection and analysis and accurately interprets the results, but would explicitly *not* depend on what those results are.

Therefore, the review process for a registered report is different, focusing on four primary issues:
(i) The scope of potential contribution: Does the paper propose to answer a sufficiently important question that has not already been fully answered. Note that a Registered Report may or may not be attempting to test a "new idea" (in fact, some may propose replications). It is valid for a Registered Report to test an idea or finding that is not "novel," in the sense that it has been discussed or even shown before, as long as there is sufficient uncertainty that remains to be resolved.

(ii) The results-independent potential informativeness: Is the paper structured in such a way that the field will learn something important no matter how the results turn out? It's fine if some potential results would be more informative than others, but it's important that the research is designed in such a way as to make null results interpretable and ideally is built around confirmatory, two-sided hypotheses. Some registered reports may use pilot data to reduce the uncertainty, e.g., about whether a manipulation is effective or about whether a study design that tests multiple hypothesis is likely to have some results, etc.

Exploratory research is generally not a good fit for a Registered Report unless the type of data being collected is so comprehensive, informative and/or novel that the field will learn something sufficiently useful no matter how it turns out. Specifically, Registered Reports are not a good format for papers who are attempting to "find an effect" unless the absence of that effect would be informative.

(iii) Feasibility and validity of the research design: Please identify anything that you think should be revised, in terms of changes/improvements so that the data collection and analysis will be as informative as possible. In a typical review process, confounds and limitations are often identified after data collection and corrected with additional studies; in a registered report, the goal is to identify such issues and improve the research design prior to data collection. If there are necessary conditions for a valid test that may not be met, those should be specified with plans for how to handle them. In some cases involving high uncertainty, it may be helpful to propose criteria that need to be met for the data collection to be considered a success (e.g., a sufficient sample size, or a sufficient frequency of the behavior of interest in the control condition, or comprehension checks, etc.)

(iv) Completeness of pre-registration: A registered report is essentially a full pre-registration. While the paper does not need to make predictions, it should pre-commit to the exact research methods, data analysis and the interpretations of different potential results. Please identify anything that you think should be revised so that the paper provides sufficient detail that all major decisions that could impact the study have been identified, clearly communicated and vetted, to prevent decision-making (or debate in the reviewer process) after the data has been collected. If there are decisions that would need to be made conditional on the data, those should be specified beforehand in the registered report (potentially even providing a decision tree).

The first round of review of a Stage 1 proposal will likely involve some "are you sure?" questions from the review team, and the more specific these can be, the better. If a revision is invited, the hope is that providing very concrete feedback in the first round will enable the authors to develop a stronger and more complete revised proposal. Because the goal is to make a decision in the second round, it is important for first round feedback to be as complete as possible.

Stage 2 Review.

The Stage 2 review process focuses on five main issues:

(i) Whether the pre-conditions for a valid test defined in Stage 1 have been met.
(ii) Whether the data collection procedures defined in Stage 1 have been followed.
(iii) Whether the results reporting is consistent with the interpretation defined in Stage 1.
(iv) Whether the paper is clearly written and draws appropriate conclusions.
(v) Whether the plan for sharing data and materials has been followed.

Notably, the review team should generally not propose reinterpretations of the results, request additional exploratory analyses or request additional data collection in Stage 2 (unless proposed to constructively handle some deviation from the Stage 1 procedures).

Summary.

Registered Report is a new format, and these guidelines will be updated as we learn from experience and in response to new questions and feedback. Please reach out with any inquiries about Registered Reports by emailing jcr@ejcr.org.

Additional resources on Registered Reports:

Briker, Roman, and Fabiola H. Gerpott. "Publishing registered reports in management and applied psychology: Common beliefs and best practices." *Organizational Research Methods* 27, no. 4 (2024): 588-620.

Henderson, Emma L., and Christopher D. Chambers. "Ten simple rules for writing a Registered Report." *PLoS Computational Biology* 18, no. 10 (2022.

Kane, John V. "More than meets the ITT: A guide for anticipating and investigating nonsignificant results in survey experiments." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2025): 110-125.

Kiyonaga, Anastasia, and Jason M. Scimeca. "Practical considerations for navigating registered reports." *Trends in neurosciences* 42, no. 9 (2019): 568-572.

Lakens, Daniël, Anne M. Scheel, and Peder M. Isager. "Equivalence testing for psychological research: A tutorial." *Advances in methods and practices in psychological science* 1, no. 2 (2018): 259-269.

Nature Human Behavior Registered Report Guidelines. https://www.nature.com/nathumbehav/submission-guidelines/registeredreports

OSF Registered Report Template. https://osf.io/93znh

Oshiro, Briana, Lindsay J. Alley, and Jessica Kay Flake. "Want to try a registered report? Here are our lessons learned." *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie expérimentale* (2024).

Simonsohn, Uri. "Small telescopes: Detectability and the evaluation of replication results." *Psychological science* 26, no. 5 (2015): 559-569.

Examples of published Registered Reports:

Banerjee, Akshina, and Oleg Urminsky. "The language that drives engagement: A systematic large-scale analysis of headline experiments." *Marketing Science* 44, no. 3 (2025): 566-592.

Hasan, Eeshan, Yanjun Liu, Nicole Owens, and Jennifer S. Trueblood. "A registered report on presentation factors that influence the attraction effect." *Judgment and Decision Making* 20 (2025): e6.

Kim, Tami, Maura Austin, Luca Cian, and Gabrielle Adams. "Effects of ancestral information on social connectedness and life meaning." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 111 (2024): 104563.

Lange, Florian, Cameron Brick, and Siegfried Dewitte. "Green when seen? No support for an effect of observability on environmental conservation in the laboratory: a registered report." *Royal Society open science* 7, no. 4 (2020): 190189.

Li, Mengfei, and Gilad Feldman. "Revisiting mental accounting classic paradigms: Replication Registered Report of the problems reviewed in Thaler (1999)." *Royal Society Open Science* 12, no. 9 (2025): 250979.

Martuza, Jareef. "A Registered Report on Gender Bias in Interpersonal Dishonesty: Are Females and Males Cheated Differently?." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 16, no. 6 (2025): 706-715.

Whillans, Ashley, and Colin West. "Alleviating time poverty among the working poor: a pre-registered longitudinal field experiment." *Scientific reports* 12, no. 1 (2022): 719.