How to get your paper rejected?

V. Krishna Nandivada

IIT Madras

13-Sep-2012

“If the universal set is too hard to reason about, try the negation.”
Motivation

Why get paper rejected?

- As a student:
Motivation

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- As a student:
  - You will be asked to make presentations - more work.
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  - The faculty may ask you to graduate - Face the real world, urgh!

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- As a professional:
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- As a professional:
  - You will be promoted – more responsibilities. :-(
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  - More income – more income tax! :-(

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  - The faculty may ask you to graduate - Face the real world, urgh!

- As a professional:
  - You will be promoted – more responsibilities. :-(
  - More income – more income tax! :-(
  - You will be pulled into different research meetings and committees.
Target audience

Who will not get much use from this talk?
  - If your ideas are bad enough.

You are already are quite successful in getting your papers rejected
Target audience

Who will not get much use from this talk?

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- Your ideas are brilliant.

Program committees cannot be trusted!
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- You are solving problems of high importance.

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Program committees cannot be trusted!

**Target:** How to make the paper suitable for rejection.
Related Work (references)

- How to get your abstract rejected? – Mary-Claire van Leunen and Richard Lipton
- 13 ways to get your manuscript rejected. – John Dunckley, Matt Hodgkinson.
- Personal discussions and experiences.
Get the paper rejected - Idea I

Submit late and do it colorfully

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Submit late and do it colorfully

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- Don’t take chances - some conferences may give even one week extension; submit significantly late.
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- Keep every member of the program committee informed of your progress with repeated emails - almost ready, anytime expected, just some more time.
Submit late and do it colorfully

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- Don’t take chances - some conferences may give even one week extension; submit significantly late.
- Keep every member of the program committee informed of your progress with repeated emails - almost ready, anytime expected, just some more time.
- This way, every committee member is sure to remember you and the abstract when it finally arrives.
Submit incorrectly; many options available.

- Don’t use the submission website - send a mail to the PC/Editor that it is against your religious beliefs.
Submit incorrectly; many options available.

- Don’t use the submission website - send a mail to the PC/Editor that it is against your religious beliefs.
- Be innovative - don’t send your manuscript to the current PC-chair. Send it to last PC-chair/editor!
Submit incorrectly; many options available.

- Don’t use the submission website - send a mail to the PC/Editor that it is against your religious beliefs.
- Be innovative - don’t send your manuscript to the current PC-chair. Send it to last PC-chair/editor!
- If the conference/journal allows postal submission use that. But be sure to send it postage due.
Get the paper rejected - Idea III

Use the size requirements to your advantage

- Grossly exceed the maximum length requirements.

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Get the paper rejected - Idea III

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- Page limit only for the main part of the paper?
  - Submit 10 pages of main paper and 30 pages of appendices
  - Make sure, there is no way the user will understand the main text without going through all the appendices.

Learn LaTeX tricks - ‘how to squeeze more text’

- no margin, zero line-skip, six point font.
  - You can fit all your forty pages of text in nine pages!

Don’t take the risk of sending overly short paper - The PC may like it and accept it.

Check the smartness of the PC: and tell the reviewers to read the 15 prime numbered pages from the submitted 43 pages.
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Vacuity

- Be vacuous and vague. Example:

Our work is based on the grandest ideas of complexity theory. We have identified many key theorems. We were successful in proving some of them and that is our contributions. We could not prove the rest. That's our future work.

We are feeling sleepy, good night.

Spend time. With constant and careful revision you can inject enough vagueness in your papers. Experience in writing vacuous manuscripts can make you extremely successful (in getting your papers rejected).

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Get the paper rejected - Idea IV

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Get the paper rejected - Idea V

Grocery list

- Your manuscript should look like a grocery list.
Get the paper rejected - Idea V

Grocery list

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- Give forty different theorems.
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- Your manuscript should look like a grocery list.
- Give forty different theorems.
- Define fifty different variable names and use them in random order.
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**Grocery list**

- Your manuscript should look like a grocery list.
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- Create forty sections in a ten page report.
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Grocery list

- Your manuscript should look like a grocery list.
- Give forty different theorems.
- Define fifty different variable names and use them in random order.
- Create forty sections in a ten page report.
- The whole of the paper should be a single enumerated list - no other structure.
Get the paper rejected - Idea VI

Paper structure

- Title should have no link to what is coming.
Get the paper rejected - Idea VI

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- Title should have no link to what is coming.
- Give no motivation.
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- Title should have no link to what is coming.
- Give no motivation.
- If possible motivate why the idea is useless.
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- Strip any details on origin, direction, or relevance.
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  - If submitting to a systems conference - give no practical application.
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- Strip any details on origin, direction, or relevance.
  - If submitting to a systems conference - give no practical application.
  - If submitting to a theory conference - give no theoretical basis to your work.
Background and references

- Provide no background to your work.
Get the paper rejected - Idea VII

Background and references

- Provide no background to your work.
- Novice: Omit references.
Background and references

- Provide no background to your work.
- Novice: Omit references.
- Expert: Also unavailable introduce references – “manuscript”, “private communication”, “in preparation”.

Note: too long a related-work may be counter productive – they may publish it as a survey!
Get the paper rejected - Idea VII

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- Lama master: Also cite unknown results using obscure + incorrect references.
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Trivial Vs Complex

- Prove trivial results/Explain trivial behaviour in exhaustive details.

Mantra: State the obvious, skip the complex bit
Get the paper rejected - Idea VIII

Trivial Vs Complex
- Prove trivial results/Explain trivial behaviour in exhaustive details.
- If the details obscure the line or reasoning - so be it.

Mantra: State the obvious, skip the complex bit
Get the paper rejected - Idea VIII

**Trivial Vs Complex**

- Prove trivial results/Explain trivial behaviour in exhaustive details.
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- One successful way: Use at least two footnotes in every sentence to explain trivia.

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- Tell the reviewer - if he/she cannot not derive the difficult proofs - they should not be reviewing it in the first place.

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- One successful way: Use at least two footnotes in every sentence to explain trivia.
- Assert difficult proofs.
- Tell the reviewer - if he/she cannot not derive the difficult proofs - they should not be reviewing it in the first place.
- Never support your conclusion with relevant facts.

*Mantra: State the obvious, skip the complex bit*
Get the paper rejected - Idea IX

Implementation and Evaluation

- In the implementation section - pasting large chunks of uncommented macro riddled C code is a good way to fill the page requirements.
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- If you have to collect statistics, limit the sample space to one. If questioned, cite the lack of space.
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- If you think that your works compares possibly against one of the reviewers - be extremely critical.

Oversell, overgeneralize.
Omit the units in charts.
Discrete points - use continuous lines. Continuous plots - histograms.
Dazzle the reviewer with twenty tables and twenty charts, all in tiny font. That way, anomalies will not be noted.
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- Dazzle the reviewer with twenty tables and twenty charts, all in tiny font. That way, anomalies will not be noted.
Conclusion and Future work

- Be imaginative - make up a more than what you have done.
Conclusion and Future work

- Be imaginative - make up a more than what you have done.
- Explicitly claim that there is no future work.
Honesty and ethics

Fudge the numbers and graphs to show that your proof of \( P = NP \) leads to polynomial time scaling of different algorithms.
Honesty and ethics

- Fudge the numbers and graphs to show that your proof of $P = NP$ leads to polynomial time scaling of different algorithms.
- Use photoshop/gimp to brush some blurry edges in image restoration results.
Honesty and ethics

- Fudge the numbers and graphs to show that your proof of $P = NP$ leads to polynomial time scaling of different algorithms.

- Use photoshop/gimp to brush some blurry edges in image restoration results.

- Try to lift paragraphs of text from different papers. If diff cannot say it matches, then it is not plagiarism.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XII

Match the opposites

- If you think your paper is moderate / weak - send it to a very high rated conference. Find appropriate venue:
Get the paper rejected - Idea XII

**Match the opposites**

- If you think your paper is moderate / weak - send it to a very high rated conference. Find appropriate venue:
  - CORE Australia ranking
Match the opposites

- If you think your paper is moderate / weak - send it to a very high rated conference. Find appropriate venue:
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Match the opposites

- If you think your paper is moderate / weak - send it to a very high rated conference. Find appropriate venue:
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- Send a theory paper to a pure systems journal / conference.
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Match the opposites

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- Send a systems paper to a pure theory conference.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XIII

Language

- Make sure your language is pompous, impersonal, drab and bleary.

Any temptation to accept the paper should be weeded out.
Language

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- Introduce your own utterly idiosyncratic notation -

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- Make sure your language is pompous, impersonal, drab and bleary.
- Introduce your own utterly idiosyncratic notation -
  - In this paper \texttt{max} is used to represent the \texttt{minimum} element.

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Get the paper rejected - Idea XIII

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- Make sure your language is pompous, impersonal, drab and bleary.
- Introduce your own utterly idiosyncratic notation -
  - In this paper $\max$ is used to represent the $\min$imum element.
  - We use $\text{func}_1$ and $\text{func}_2$ to refer to $\text{variables}$ and $\text{var}_1 \text{ var}_2$ to refer to functions.

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Get the paper rejected - Idea XIII

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  - We use $\text{func}_1$ and $\text{func}_2$ to refer to variables and $\text{var}_1 \ \text{var}_2$ to refer to functions.
- Let no two consecutive sentences have any relation between them.

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Get the paper rejected - Idea XIII

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- Make sure your language is pompous, impersonal, drab and bleary.
- Introduce your own utterly idiosyncratic notation -
  - In this paper \( \text{max} \) is used to represent the \( \text{minimum} \) element.
  - We use \( \text{func}_1 \) and \( \text{func}_2 \) to refer to \textit{variables} and \( \text{var}_1 \ \text{var}_2 \) to refer to functions.
- Let no two consecutive sentences have any relation between them.
- Keep no flow between consecutive paragraphs.

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- Let no two consecutive sentences have any relation between them.
- Keep no flow between consecutive paragraphs.
- Don’t waste time to run a spell check.

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Get the paper rejected - Idea XIV

Working hard with your grammar

- Agreement between subject and the verb -
Working hard with your grammar

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  - Thousand dollars are a lot of money.
  - Everybody knows Donald Knuth.
  - The boy or his friends runs every day.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XIV

Working hard with your grammar

- Agreement between subject and the verb -
  - Thousand dollars are a lot of money.
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- Play safe, put a comma after every word.
  - My, name, is, Bond, James, Bond.

Randomly replace a comma with ‘!’ and ‘?’

My! name, is, Bond? James? Bond!

Be liberal in your usage of indefinite pronouns - somebody, someone, something.

We present our results for HP, Sun and Intel architectures. It had a large L2 cache.
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  - Thousand dollars are a lot of money.
  - Everybody know Donald Knuth.
  - The boy or his friends runs every day.

- Play safe, put a comma after every word.
  - My, name, is, Bond, James, Bond.

- Randomly replace a comma with ‘!’ and ’?’
  - My! name, is, Bond? James? Bond!

- Be liberal in your usage of indefinite pronouns - somebody, someone, something.

- Parallal structure + infinite referrant
  - We present our results for HP, Sun and Intel architectures. It had a large L2 cache.
The while loop

- Once you have soundly accept-proof manuscript - resubmit it every time, unchanged.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XV

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- On a resubmission, don’t worry about fixing the problems cited by the previous submission.
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The while loop

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- On a resubmission, don’t worry about fixing the problems cited by the previous submission.
- You should become part of the mythology of that conference.
- “Did you get that paper on Solving no-body equation by everybody?”
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution

- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.

Pipelined execution
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution

- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
- Keep the content (including the title) same.

Pipelined execution
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution

- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
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- Outside story: At least one of the venues will accept the paper!

Pipelined execution
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

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Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

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Pipelined execution
- Submit incremental papers to same/different venues.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution
- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
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Pipelined execution
- Submit incremental papers to same/different venues.
- Change the title (different title ⇔ different paper).
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution
- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
- Keep the content (including the title) same.
- Outside story: At least one of the venues will accept the paper!
- Actual advantage: Both will be rejected!

Pipelined execution
- Submit incremental papers to same/different venues.
- Change the title (different title ⇔ different paper).
- At least 89% overlap.
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution

- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
- Keep the content (including the title) same.
- Outside story: At least one of the venues will accept the paper!
- Actual advantage: Both will be rejected!

Pipelined execution

- Submit incremental papers to same/different venues.
- Change the title (different title ⇔ different paper).
- At least 89% overlap.
- Outside story: With 2x content, I can get 10x papers! (If you are ready to forego the representation: 2 = 10)
Get the paper rejected - Idea XVI

Parallel execution

- Submit the same paper to multiple conferences / journals at the same time.
- Keep the content (including the title) same.
- Outside story: At least one of the venues will accept the paper!
- Actual advantage: Both will be rejected!

Pipelined execution

- Submit incremental papers to same/different venues.
- Change the title (different title ⇔ different paper).
- At least 89% overlap.
- Outside story: With 2x content, I can get 10x papers! (If you are ready to forego the representation: 2 = 10!)
- Actual advantage: majority will be rejected!
Etiquette

- Argue with the referees and during rebuttal.
Get the idea rejected - idea XVII

Etiquette

- Argue with the referees and during rebuttal.
- If you don’t agree with the referee then attack personally. You probably have a nagging wife, that’s why you could not understand my manuscript.

Don’t spare the editor either. Dazzle them with your personality. Do you know who I am?
Get the idea rejected - idea XVII

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Get the idea rejected - idea XVII

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Get the paper rejected - Conclusion

Fate

- Even after adopting all these strategies, if it gets accepted - don’t despair.

Don’t let it happen too often!
Get the paper rejected - Conclusion

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Get the paper rejected - Conclusion

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- PC has certain quotas to fill!
- Some papers must be accepted regardless of merit.

Don’t let it happen too often!
Get the paper rejected - Conclusion

Fate
- Even after adopting all these strategies, if it get accepted - don’t despair.
- Don’t take it personally.
- PC has certain quotas to fill!
- Some papers must be accepted regardless of merit.
- Your friends will understand and not hold it against you.

Don’t let it happen too often!
PLEASE DO NOT ATTEND

**Title:** How to get published and enhance your scientific career

**Speaker:** Dr. Nina Couzin, (Institute of Physics (IoP) publishing, UK)

**Venue, date and time:** Ph.L.T., 21th Sept.. 2012, 5pm.