Getting your first papers published is a stressful activity – you send them off and wait to hear what some anonymous strangers think, and how the editor then whimsically decides their fate. The question is, how can you improve your chances for a positive outcome? To be honest, the journal is looking for the best possible science; your paper has to present a solid block of research, an interpretation that makes scientific sense, and answer the question “So what?”. But there are additional ways to improve your chances of a positive outcome. I'll talk about three topics today:

1. being a good peer reviewer, especially for journals to which you will submit your work
2. effectively (and professionally) responding to editorial and peer-review comments of your submissions
3. developing a strategic “References” section for your paper

Nothing can guarantee the ultimate acceptance of your paper at your journal of choice. However, gaining a better understanding as to how things work behind the curtain of the great Oz (the editor), can certainly help skew the outcome in your favor. I hope to share some strategies to make that happen.