

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE PEER REVIEW REPORT

GOAL:

A peer review report has two purposes, and two different audiences.

1. To help the journal **editor(s) decide** whether a paper:
 - a. falls within the scope of the journal
 - b. is novel and/or significant enough in content to be published, and
 - c. is clear and consistent enough in its presentation to be understood.
2. If edits are necessary before the paper is accepted (which happens in the majority of cases), to **provide the author with specific and helpful guidance** about what needs adjusting.

HERE S HOW:

- **Before you begin:**
 - Read the entire paper once over to get an overall picture
 - Familiarize yourself with the journal's guidelines.
- **Content:** Examine and comment on all aspects of the paper, and ask whether they work together and are consistent with each other. Does the evidence support the conclusion? Does the conclusion match the introduction? Do the images and graphs support the content, and are they clearly and legibly labeled?
- **Recommendation:** Including a recommendation (accept, accept with revisions, or reject) *in the comments for the editor only*. Acceptances with no revisions are rare. If recommending a rejection, state the reasons for your recommendation. If recommending to accept with revisions, structure your author's report in the following way.
- **Structure:** Structure your author's report in a way that will be useful to both the editor and the author. Useful to include are:
 - A succinct summary or overview of the paper that answers these questions:
 - Is it appropriate for the journal, given the journal's mission?

- What will this paper contribute to the field as a whole?
 - Is the assertion clearly stated and well proven? Does it make sense, and does the author prove their claims with the evidence presented?
 - What's missing? What, if anything, do you have concerns about?
 - General strengths and weaknesses.
 - A detailed list of more granular comments about: structure, evidence, points of unclarity or confusion, graphics—any changes that will make the paper stronger and help bolster its conclusion. If the changes are major or structural, please list them in order importance or theme.
 - Minor changes should be listed in order of occurrence, locating the comment and change precisely (i.e. “Page 17, Line 63: This claim needs more evidence.”)
 - Look at the title and the abstract, if applicable. Do they represent the content of the paper well?
 - Include in the general comments as much detail as would be helpful to the author, then anything additional into the private comments for the editor(s).
- **Tone:** There are two parts to a peer review: comments that will go to the author, and comments only the editor(s) will see. In both your authors' and editors' comments, please write something you would be pleased to receive from a helpful, knowledgeable and professional colleague you don't know well.
 - **What to leave out:**
 - **Copyediting** changes include changes to individual sentences: grammar, spelling, sentence structure. If a paper needs copyediting, please note it to the editors, but *do not* include copyedits in your comments or work. The journal's copyeditors will make sure that those things are addressed if the paper is published.
 - **Keep in mind:** The author will be sent a copy of all peer review comments that aren't marked as confidential to the editor. If asked for revisions, they will use these comments to refine their paper for publication. *Please do not include your publication recommendation in the authors' report. Peer review reports are for recommendation purposes only, and final decision to publish rests solely with the editor(s).*

WHAT TO DO AFTER RECEIVING AN INVITATION TO PEER REVIEW

Congratulations, you've received an invitation to peer review. Now what? Here are a few questions to ask yourself.

1. **Are you a good fit?** If you've been asked to peer review a paper, the editor already thinks you are qualified to write it. A peer reviewer should have enough familiarity with the field to have an idea of where the manuscript might fit. You don't have to be an expert in everything, though; the editor may be asking you to review a specific aspect of the paper.
2. **Do you have conflicts of interest?** As an example, you should not be reviewing the paper of anyone you have worked with, taught, and/or published work with in the past. It is important to highlight to the journal editor any conflict of interest that you feel might occur if you review the paper. Please do so as discreetly and as quickly as possible. More on [Ethical responsibilities as a reviewer](#).
3. **Do you have availability?** If you think you won't be able to finish the review in the time allotted, please let the editor know. Timeliness is crucial to a journal's publication schedule, but you may be able to negotiate a new deadline.
4. Although the editor is, of course, hoping you'll accept, declining is fine. If you do, please be specific about why, and let the editor know if you are open to peer reviewing for them in the future.
5. If you're not able to do it, but know someone who may be right for it, please don't hesitate to **recommend** them.

Further guidelines such as making your recommendation to Accept, Reject, Minor or Major Revision, can be found at [SAGE Reviewer Gateway](#)

Please visit the [Reviewer Rewards](#) page to learn more about discounts and free journal access offered to reviewers of articles for SAGE journals.