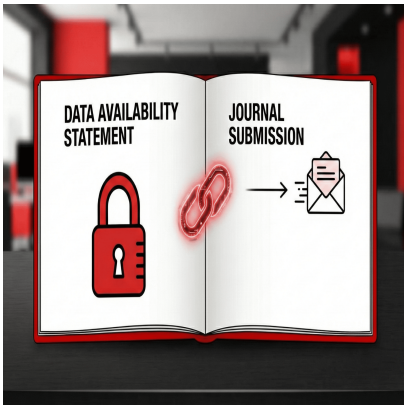


## Description

Mandatory open-data policies no longer apply only to a handful of “data-heavy” fields. Across disciplines, journals and funders increasingly expect authors to disclose what underlying data exist, where those data can be accessed, and under what conditions often at the initial submission stage, not after acceptance. Springer Nature, for example, has introduced a standard research data policy that requires a Data Availability Statement (DAS) for original research, even when data cannot be shared openly.

For many researchers, the friction point is practical: the dataset is not ready to be fully public, the journal uses double-blind peer review, or the repository DOI is not yet active. This is where private reviewer links (also called “private links,” “reviewer links,” or “temporary sharing URLs”) become essential. This article explains how to navigate Data Availability Statement requirements during the journal submission process: selecting an appropriate repository workflow, generating reviewer-access links in repositories such as Figshare and Dryad, and writing a Data Availability Statement that editors can quickly verify before they send a manuscript for review.

# Why Journals Ask for a Data Availability Statement (and What “Mandatory” Really Means)

A Data Availability Statement is a short section in the manuscript that tells readers and editors where the data supporting the results can be found (or why they cannot be shared). Increasingly, it also serves as a screening tool during submission: if the journal requires open data (or requires transparent disclosure), missing or vague statements can lead to avoidable delays, returned submissions, or desk rejections.

It is also important to recognize that “mandatory” has layers. Some journals mandate deposition of certain data types into specific community repositories. Others do not mandate sharing, but still require transparency about availability. Springer Nature explicitly positions its policy as requiring a DAS while acknowledging that not all data can be shared publicly (for instance, identifiable human participant data). PLOS, in contrast, generally requires authors to make data needed to replicate findings publicly available at publication, while allowing restrictions when legal or ethical rules prevent open sharing, as long as the DAS clearly explains the access pathway.

For authors trying to submit a paper to journal systems under tight deadlines, the practical takeaway is simple: the DAS is not “administrative filler.” It is a compliance artifact that editors use to judge whether the manuscript can proceed.

## Decide the Right Data-Release Route Before Uploading Anything

Before generating links or drafting the DAS, authors typically benefit from a quick policy-to-workflow mapping. Most submission problems occur because the repository settings and the DAS are planned in isolation.

A workable decision sequence looks like this:

1. Confirm the journal’s data policy level (required DAS only vs required deposition vs required public release at submission vs at publication).
2. Check whether the journal uses double-blind review. If it does, the dataset landing page and files should not reveal author identities during review.
3. Classify the data as open, restricted, or non-shareable:
    - **Open:** can be shared publicly with appropriate licensing.
    - **Restricted:** can be shared with controlled access (e.g., via a data access committee, application process, or restricted repository).
    - **Non-shareable:** cannot be shared due to legal or ethical constraints; however, journals still expect transparent disclosure and, where feasible, a process for qualified access.

Springer Nature explicitly notes that reviewers may request access to data that are not publicly available, and that repositories can support peer-review access via private links that do not include author information, particularly relevant in double-blind workflows.

## How to Generate Private Reviewer Links in Figshare (and What to Double-Check)

Figshare supports private links that allow access to files and metadata before the item is public, including for anonymous peer review. In Figshare’s user guide, the private link function is presented as a way to share unpublished or embargoed content privately (for example, during peer review), and it can also be configured with an expiration date.

A typical Figshare workflow during submission is:

1. Upload files and complete the item metadata as required by the repository or journal integration.
2. Use the item’s sharing controls to select “Share with private link.”
3. Configure expiration (optional) and copy the generated URL for the submission system.

Two details matter for compliance, and are easy to miss during a rushed journal submission process:

**First,** Figshare notes that people accessing the private link will see an anonymized version of metadata (author information removed). However, the files themselves may still contain identifiers (for

example, institution names in file properties, author names in a readme, or acknowledgments in supplementary PDFs). Figshare explicitly warns that anyone with the private link can view and download files, so the files should be anonymized when needed for double-blind peer review.

**Second,** private links are not meant to be permanent scholarly identifiers. Figshare documentation and peer review guidance emphasize that private links support anonymous access during review, whereas the DOI (once public) should be used for the final, published record.

## How Dryad Handles “Private for Peer Review” Links (and What “Temporary” Means)

Dryad offers a specific setting called “Private for Peer Review.” When selected, the dataset remains private while the associated manuscript is under peer review, and Dryad provides a private URL that supports double-anonymous download for reviewers and journal staff.

Dryad also clarifies a key distinction that directly affects how the Data Availability Statement should be written:

- The reviewer sharing link is a temporary URL that provides access to uncurated data during review and is not a permanent identifier.
- The dataset’s reserved DOI is permanent and will activate upon publication of the dataset.

This matters because many journals want a stable pointer in the final article. A strong submission workflow therefore uses (a) the private URL for peer review access and (b) the DOI once the dataset is released and published, updating the manuscript at the appropriate stage if the journal allows (often at acceptance or proofs).

Dryad also notes that submissions left in “Private for Peer Review” for one year with no activity may be withdrawn, which is another reason not to treat the peer-review link as an archival citation.

## How to Format a Data Availability Statement That Editors Can Verify Quickly

Most journals do not require literary polish in a Data Availability Statement, but they do require precision. A strong statement answers, in a small number of sentences:

- What data are covered (raw data, processed data, code, materials).
- Where they are (repository name + persistent identifier such as DOI or accession number).
- When access applies (available now, available upon publication, under embargo).
- How access works if restricted (who controls access, what process, what conditions).
- Why data are not shared if applicable (privacy, consent limits, legal restrictions, third-party licensing).

Springer Nature's guidance is explicit that a DAS should describe how to access data supporting the results, include persistent identifiers (e.g., DOI or accession number) when deposited in repositories, and explain when data cannot be shared openly (for example, participant privacy).

# Repository-Based DAS Templates (Adapt as Needed)

## 1) Data Publicly Available Now (Best When Allowed at Submission)

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available in [Repository name] at [DOI or accession number].

## 2) Data Deposited but Private for Peer Review (Double-Blind Workflow)

The data supporting the findings of this study have been deposited in [Repository name]. During peer review, editors and reviewers can access the files via the private reviewer link provided in the submission system. Upon acceptance/publication, the dataset will be made publicly available and will be accessible via [reserved DOI, if available].

This approach aligns with how repositories differentiate temporary reviewer links from permanent identifiers (e.g., Dryad's temporary private URL vs reserved DOI).

## 3) Restricted Access Due to Ethics/Legal Constraints (But Access Possible)

The data are not publicly available due to [brief reason, e.g., identifiable human participant information and consent limitations]. De-identified data may be made available to qualified researchers upon reasonable request and with approval from [data access committee / institution / ethics board], subject to [data use agreement / IRB conditions].

This direction matches major journal policies that accept restrictions when justified, as long as the DAS clearly states the pathway for access.

## 4) Third-Party/Licensed Data (Authors Cannot Share)

The study analyzed data obtained from [provider] under license and the authors do not have permission to share the data publicly. Researchers may obtain access by applying directly to [provider] at [instructions or access page]. Any derived data that can be shared are available at [repository/DOI].

PLOS explicitly addresses third-party data limitations and expects authors to provide enough information for others to seek access.

# Common Mistakes That Trigger Avoidable Back-and-Forth During Submission

Several issues repeatedly slow down the journal submission process, especially for early-career researchers navigating open-data requirements for the first time.

A frequent problem is using a reviewer-only private link as the final citation. Repositories and journal guidance generally treat reviewer links as temporary access mechanisms; final publication should point to a DOI, accession number, or stable landing page. Dryad is particularly explicit that the reviewer sharing link is not a permanent identifier and should be replaced by the DOI later.

Another common issue is double-blind leakage. Even when repository metadata are anonymized, file contents may expose authorship (for example, a methods appendix with institutional letterhead). Figshare explicitly warns that private-link recipients can see any identifying information within the files, so anonymization should be handled before sharing.

Finally, many Data Availability Statement drafts fail because they are overly generic, such as “Data available upon request,” without naming who controls access or what qualifies a request as reasonable. Policies increasingly expect specificity, particularly when restrictions apply.

## A Submission-Ready Workflow: What to Finalize Before Clicking “Submit”

For researchers aiming to submit a paper to journal portals smoothly, a short pre-submit sequence can reduce compliance surprises:

1. Confirm the journal’s DAS wording requirements and whether the journal publishes the statement verbatim.
2. Deposit data in an appropriate repository (disciplinary if mandated; generalist if allowed).
3. If peer review requires confidentiality, generate a private reviewer link (Figshare private link or Dryad “Private for Peer Review” URL) and verify it opens without logging in.
4. Review files for anonymization if the journal uses double-blind peer review.
5. Draft the Data Availability Statement with a persistent identifier when available (DOI/accession) and clear conditions if not.
6. Place the reviewer link only where the journal requests it (often in submission fields, not in the main manuscript), and plan to update the DAS at acceptance if needed.

This is also where many authors benefit from practical research paper publication support. If the submission portal requires multiple disclosures and supplementary documents, a managed journal submission workflow can reduce returned submissions by ensuring all forms, declarations, and uploads align with the journal’s requirements. Enago’s journal submission assistance can help coordinate these compliance elements, especially when datasets, supplementary files, and policy statements must be aligned across systems.

## Closing Perspective: Treat the DAS as Part of Research Transparency, Not a Last-Minute Formality

Data Availability Statements and repository linking have become integral to how journals operationalize

transparency. When handled proactively, by aligning repository settings, private reviewer access, and a precise DAS, authors can reduce avoidable submission delays and keep editorial evaluation focused on the science.

Researchers preparing for a time-sensitive submission can also consider targeted support such as submission assistance to keep policy-driven details (including data statements and supplementary files) consistent across the manuscript and submission system, which can help streamline the overall paper submission process.

**Category**

1. Articles
2. Publishing Research
3. Submitting Manuscripts

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