

Facing Journal Rejection: What to Do When You Don't Succeed at First

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Post Url

<https://www.enago.com/academy/facing-journal-rejection/>

As a new researcher, eager to build a track record and climb the academic rank ladder, receiving a rejection notice from an academic journal can be devastating.

You look back on all the hours you put into writing, editing, and formatting the article and immediately dismiss them as a complete waste of time. You then start planning how to notify your colleagues and begin looking for job opportunities on the most remote research stations on the planet.

Alternatively, you may subscribe to the more aggressive model of “the best defense is a good offense,” and dismiss the journal reviewers as uneducated philistines who simply did not recognize the genius of your work.

Facing paper rejection is harsh, but the choice thereafter is yours. You can burn the rejection notice, or frame it for further motivation and start preparation to re-submit your paper. What makes you think that the journal will not appreciate your work again the second time?

Revise and Resubmit

A [revise and submit](#) notice can be a little harder to gauge. The reviewers didn't hate your paper, but they clearly didn't love it either.

It obviously hasn't been accepted without reservation, and the journal editor hasn't contacted you to have lunch the next time you're in town, so you clearly have some work to do.

The question is, how do you decide whether or not you want to do the work?

Convince Your Rebellious Mind with Comparative Metrics

The logical choice would be to look at how much revision the reviewers are asking for. Then compare that to the amount of work you think will be involved in declining the invitation to resubmit and moving on to [submission to another journal](#) (that may require a [different style format](#)).

Looking at the revisions as a simple number can be challenging, especially if the number of reviewer comments starts increasing. Your self-confidence can take a major hit, and your internal critic will start telling you that the reviewers really hated the paper but felt sorry for you and gave you another chance with so [many revisions](#) that you would be better off starting the paper over again.

If you can survive that brief loss of confidence, you will probably realize that there is no equality in the number of comments. Some could be quick fixes, and others might require requests for clarification if you don't understand what the comment means.

On that basis, the number becomes irrelevant. If you're still looking for a metric to help you decide, the simpler but less scientific approach is to ask yourself how badly you want to see your name in this journal? After all, it was your first choice (assuming that we're dealing with your first submission and response), and the window of opportunity isn't closed.

So unless your work schedule has changed dramatically and you no longer have the time available, why would you want to start over with another journal and, if you're really unlucky, the possibility of crossing paths with the same set of reviewers?

The Power of Persistence is Eventually Glorious

Researchers have a tendency to think of the opportunity of [publication](#) as the last stop on a long journey.

You developed the [research proposal](#), got it funded, conducted the study with great care, and analyzed the data objectively. Now, when faced with requested revisions, you look back down that road and question whether you have the strength to revisit all that work to make those revisions.

From that perspective, it will look like a lot of work, but if you look at the one last step that stands between you and your name in print, you'll find that you don't need as much strength as you would if you embraced the opportunity to [re-submit](#) and chose to start over again!

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