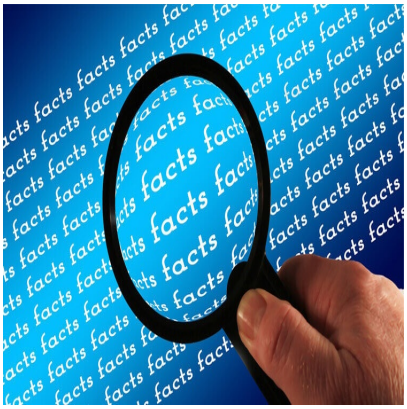


Description

As a peer reviewer, your job is to uphold the quality of published science by ensuring that academic papers are accurate and clearly articulated. Young scientists eager to publish their hard work will appreciate the quality feedback to help them improve their manuscript. Therefore, to be a good peer reviewer you need to be an expert in your field, be fair to the author and journal, meet deadlines, be honest in your opinion, and kind in your criticism.

How to Evaluate a Manuscript as a Peer Reviewer

Before you accept to peer review a manuscript, ensure that you:

- are familiar with the field and the methods used in the paper.
- have no conflicts of interest.
- have the time to review the paper within the given timelines.



Once you have accepted to peer review, the next step is to evaluate the manuscript. To evaluate the manuscript as a peer reviewer, experienced reviewers recommend you read the paper three times. Give yourself time to think about the research in between each reading.

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First Reading

This is a quick overview of the paper. Is the manuscript publishable in the specified journal? Write a summary of the paper including the paper's main research question and whether this question was answered. Furthermore, were the methods appropriate to address the question. If you feel the paper is unpublishable at this point, then there is no need to review it any further. Reject the paper and give your reasons. These may include discredited methods used in the paper, disagreement with the conclusion, or unreadable grammar.

Second Reading

Read the paper in detail and note down your comments, both positive and negative for each section. Here you will assess whether the author has addressed each section appropriately. Questions you should ask:

- Is the research novel?
- Was the necessary background and relevance clearly articulated?
- Was the research question appropriately addressed?
- Are the results (including figures) easy to understand and interpret?
- Were other considerations omitted?
- Were key papers in the field referenced?

Third Reading

Assess the flow, grammar, headings, references, and general organization of the paper. If the journal has their own copy-editors, then focus on the science since any grammar issues will be dealt with by the publisher.

How to Format a Peer Review Report

The format of the peer review report will vary depending on the journal's requirements – any reviewing instructions can be checked on the journal's website before you start. **Number** your comments for easy reference. A common peer review report has the following format:

Summary

Briefly describe the main research question and conclusion, as well as the relevance to the journal. Give its overall strengths and quality as well as any major weaknesses. Start with your positive comments.

Major Issues

These could be flawed research, previously published research, major grammar corrections, insufficient evidence for their conclusions, or ethical issues.

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Minor Issues

These include minor corrections such as ambiguous meanings, errors in references, minor factual errors, and suggested modifications to tables and figures.

Recommendation

Give your recommendation with reasons.

Be the Author's Friend

Keep in mind that not all research is perfect and often a paper may have minor flaws in the data. Your expertise in the field and methodology will make you aware of what kind of imperfections are common and acceptable.

Although the paper will have answered some questions, more questions may be exposed that can be answered in subsequent research. This is how the field of science grows and knowledge is built.

Help the author publish their work and if it is not suitable for the journal, then recommend they submit to a more appropriate journal. Keep your comments constructive and offer helpful suggestions. Avoid bias and unreasonable demands.

Being asked to peer review your first article may be daunting. Do you have any other suggestions for peer reviewers?

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Understanding Reviews

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2020/01/08
Author
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