

Know the Journey Behind an Editorial Decision in the Digital Age

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After months of data collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation, it is a huge relief when you finally submit your manuscript for publication. However, what happens to a [research paper](#) after you have clicked "submit"? The review process can take many months; this is a long time to wait when you have no idea what is going on. In this article, we describe the review process step-by-step and explain how editors and reviewers appraise a manuscript.

Does Your Paper Fit the Bill?

The first person to see your research paper is the managing editor, who decides whether it is suitable for peer review or not. During this preliminary screening process, your manuscript will be assessed based on its relevance, originality, quality, and whether or not it fits the scope of the journal. Papers that do not meet these basic criteria are [rejected outright](#) without review. Consulting and adhering to the author

guidelines can help to avoid this. The reasons for outright rejection are usually explained. Fortunately, most journals will make this decision quickly, allowing the author to submit their paper elsewhere.

Manuscript Appraisal

Once the editorial team decides that your manuscript is worthy of consideration they will send it out for peer review. In most cases, at least two reviewers are chosen. Reviewers are selected based on their knowledge of the subject and their ability to assess the manuscript within the time-frame allotted by the journal. The role of the peer reviewer is to critically assess the manuscript and make a recommendation about its suitability for publication. One role of the editor is to monitor the process and ensure that it is completed fairly and in a timely manner. The editor also evaluates the peer review reports and makes a final decision.

Most journals have an online manuscript tracking system that shows the manuscript's current status. Paper status indicators include:

- New submission: The editorial team is screening the manuscript for basic journal requirements
- Awaiting allocation: The editorial team is assigning the paper to suitable reviewers
- Under review: Two or more expert reviewers are currently reviewing the manuscript
- Final decision: The editor has received the peer review reports and has made a final decision

Possible Decisions

The editor makes his/her final decision after evaluating the peer review reports. This will be one of the following:

- Reject: Peer reviewers have reviewed the paper and do not find it suitable for publication
- Revise and resubmit: The most common decision; after peer review, the editor thinks it could be suitable for publication after making substantial revisions
- Accept with minor revisions: After peer reviewing the paper, the editor finds it suitable for publication, with some minor modifications
- Accept: Post peer reviewing, if the paper does not need changes then it gets accepted for publication

A “revise and resubmit” decision should not be considered discouraging since, after the first review, very few manuscripts get accepted outright or accepted with minor revisions. Instead, consider this as a positive outcome.

Revise and Resubmit

Why is a revise and resubmit decision considered positive? Well, in most cases, critical analysis by peer reviewers will highlight important issues that you had not previously considered. Addressing these issues will most likely improve the quality of your manuscript. Therefore, it is important to respond to the reviewers' comments with respect. Remember that the reviewer has taken time out of his/her busy schedule to help you get your manuscript to a standard suitable for publication.

Start by reading each comment carefully, and then do what you can to address them. Write [a detailed report](#) that clearly explains what you have changed and how. Direct the reviewer to the changes in the revised version; do so with page and line numbers if possible. Next, explain clearly which comments/suggestions you have *not* addressed and *why*. If you find any of the reviewers' comments unreasonable, respond to them firmly but politely. Remember that acceptance of your manuscript is not guaranteed and that you are facing a second round of review and decision. Do not try to dispute the decision of the editor or reviewers at this stage.

The revised manuscript will be accepted for publication once it meets the demands of the reviewers and the editor. The author will be asked to check proofs and return copyright forms before the paper is finally published.

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