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EDITORRESOURCES

Supporting Taylor & Francis journal editors

A guide to
becoming a
peer reviewer



INTRODUCTION

At Taylor & Francis, we understand the importance of an effective peer review when authors choose to submit their research. We work to establish and sustain peer review integrity on every journal. A vital part of this means ensuring that reviewers have the right resources to carry out their work efficiently and effectively. The review process varies from journal to journal, but this guide gives an overview of what's involved in becoming a reviewer with a Taylor & Francis journal.

Contents

What is peer review and why is it important?

Peer review, also known as refereeing, is a collaborative process that allows independent experts in the same field of research to evaluate and comment on manuscript submissions. The outcome of a peer review gives authors feedback to improve their work and, critically, allows the editor to assess the paper's suitability for publication.

The peer review process may adopt one of the following forms:

- **Single-blind review.** The reviewer's name isn't disclosed to the author.
- **Double-blind review.** The identity of the reviewers and the authors aren't disclosed.
- **Open review.** Both the author and reviewer names are disclosed.
- **Post-publication open review.** Readers and reviewers can post comments, mediated by the editor, after publication.

Single- and double-blind review are the most common methods of peer review.

This process upholds the integrity of scholarly communication. It ensures that published research is accurate, trustworthy, and meets the highest standards. Every journal depends on the hard work of reviewers who test and refine each article before publication.

Why should you become a peer reviewer?

Peer reviewing is a form of collaboration between experts. Their critical feedback often improves research and helps propel it forward.

But how does being a reviewer help your career? Here are some ways that you can benefit:

Keep up with the latest research

As a reviewer, you get an early view of the exciting new research happening in your field. Not only that, peer review gives you a role in helping to evaluate and improve this new work.

Improve your own writing

Reviewing articles written by other researchers can give you insight into how to improve your own. The process of reviewing encourages you to think critically about what makes an article good (or not so good). As you review more papers, you'll start to spot common mistakes. This could relate to writing style, presentation, or the clarity of explanations. You can then use this knowledge in your own writing and improve your chances of publication.

Boost your career

While a lot of reviewing is anonymous, there are schemes to recognize the important contribution of reviewers. These include reviewer lists in journals, reviewer certificates, and [Publons](#). You can also include your reviewing work on your resume. Your work as a reviewer will interest appointment or promotion committees looking for evidence of service to the profession.

Become part of a journal's community

Many journals are the center of a network of researchers who discuss key themes and developments in the field. Becoming a reviewer is a great way to get involved with that group. This gives you the opportunity to build new connections for future collaborations. Being a regular reviewer may also be the first step to becoming a member of the journal's editorial board.

How can you become a peer reviewer?

Contact the editor

Journal editors are always looking out for new reviewers, especially those with expertise in areas under-represented in the journal's pool of contacts. If there's a journal that you read regularly, email the editor directly. Tell them about your areas of expertise, your publication record, and your interest in reviewing. If you attend any academic conferences, these are good opportunities to meet editors who might be looking for new reviewers.

Ask a senior colleague to recommend you

Is there someone who knows your work and is already involved with a journal, or regularly reviews? Ask whether they would be willing to pass on your details to the editor. They may also have some useful experience from when they first became a reviewer.

Look out for calls for reviewers

Some journals make specific invitations for reviewers to get in touch. This might be the case if the journal is new or expanding its scope into a different area.

Register with the journal's publisher

Some publishers invite aspiring reviewers to add their details to a reviewer database. For example, [Dove Press has a reviewer registration page](#). Here, you can enter your research specialisms and select the journals you'd be interested in reviewing for.

Find a mentor

Ask a senior colleague, with experience of reviewing, whether you could work with them on a review. Some journals also run mentoring schemes, designed to help support first-time reviewers.

Be visible on researcher networking sites

Academic networking sites, such as ResearchGate or Academia.edu, are opportunities to build a profile that editors looking for new reviewers can find. Make sure that your profile includes lots of detail about your current areas of research. You should also add links to any published journal articles or books.

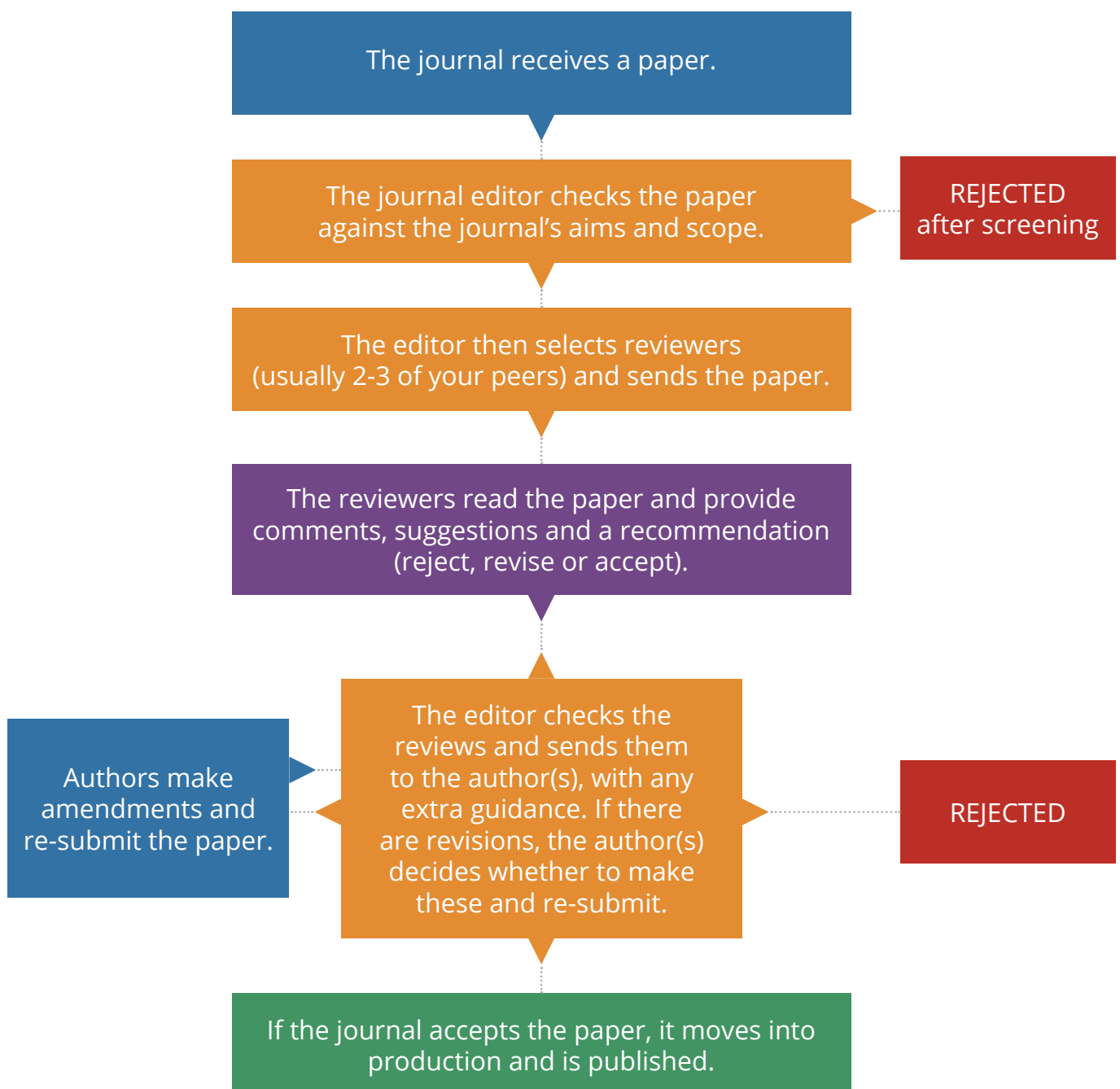
Write a paper

Many journals add authors who have published with them to their database of reviewers. While you're unlikely to write a paper just for the opportunity to review, submitting a research paper or book review is a good way to become part of the community around that journal. It also means the editor is more likely to invite you to review when they receive a submission on a related topic to your own.

[Read tips from Nazira Albargothy](#), for her advice on how early-career researchers can get their foot in the door.

What's the process of peer review?

Peer review involves the following steps:



How should you write a peer review report?

Before agreeing to review for a journal, consider the following:

- [What form of review](#) does the journal operate?
- How will you need to submit your review? For example, is there a structured form for reviewers to complete or will you need to write free text?
- Are you aware of the [ethical guidelines](#) for reviewers?
- Do you have any [conflicts of interest](#)? If so, make the editor aware immediately.
- Can you complete the review in the allotted time? If you struggle to meet the deadline, let the editor know, so they can inform the author.

WRITING A REVIEW REPORT: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

STEP 1 Research the journal

Visit the journal homepage (on [Taylor & Francis Online](#)) to get a sense of the journal's content and house style. This will help you decide whether the paper you're reviewing is suitable for the journal or not.

Refer to the Instructions for Authors to check if the paper meets the submission criteria of the journal (e.g. length, scope, and presentation).

STEP 2 Write your report

The two main factors you should provide advice on are:

- the originality, presentation, and relevance of the manuscript's subject matter to the readership of the journal
- the accuracy of the methodology.

Here are some questions to consider when reading the manuscript:

- Is the submission original?
- Does the paper fit the scope of the journal?
- Would the paper be of interest to the readership of the journal?
- Does the paper help to expand or further research in this subject area?
- Does it significantly build on (the author's) previous work?
- Do you feel that the significance and potential impact of a paper is high or low?
- Is the paper complete? Is there an abstract or summary of the work undertaken as well as a conclusion?
- Is the methodology and any analysis provided in the manuscript both accurate and properly conducted?
- Are all relevant accompanying data, citations, or references given by the author?
- Does it need shortening and changed to another form?
- Would you recommend that the author reconsider the paper for a different journal?
- Is the submission in Standard English to aid the understanding of the reader? For non-native speakers, the [Taylor & Francis Editing Services](#) may be useful.

STEP 3 Provide detailed comments

- These should be suitable for sending to the author. Use these comments to make constructive suggestions, seek clarification on any unclear points, and ask for further elaboration.
- Make suggestions on how the author can improve clarity, succinctness, and the quality of presentation.
- Confirm whether you feel the subject of the paper is sufficiently interesting to justify its length. If you recommend shortening, show specific areas where you think it's required.
- It's not the reviewer's job to edit the paper for English, but it is helpful if you correct the English where the technical meaning is unclear.
- A referee may disagree with the author's opinions, but should allow them to stand, provided their evidence supports it.
- Remember that authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism.

Being critical whilst remaining sensitive to the author isn't always easy. Comments should be carefully worded so the author understands what actions they need to take to improve their paper. Avoid generalized or vague statements as well as any negative comments which aren't relevant or constructive.

Sample comments

Please note that these are just examples of how you might provide feedback on an author's work. You should, of course, always tailor your review to the paper in question and the specific requirements of the journal and the editor.

Positive comments

- *The manuscript is well written in an engaging and lively style.*
- *The level is appropriate to our readership.*
- *The subject is very important. It's currently something of a "hot topic" and is one to which the author has made significant contributions.*
- *This manuscript ticks all the boxes we have in mind for an X paper. I have no hesitation in recommending that it be accepted for publication after a few typos and other minor details have been attended to.*
- *Given the complexity involved, the author has produced many positive and welcome outcomes. The literature review offers a useful overview of current research and policy, and the resulting bibliography provides a very useful resource for current practitioners.*
- *This is a well-written article that identifies an important gap.*

Constructive criticism

- *In the "Discussion" section I would have wished to see more information on...*
- *I don't think that this article contains enough robust data to evidence the statement made on page X, lines Y-Z.*
- *I would strongly advise the author to rewrite their introduction, analysis, and discussion to produce a more contextualized introduction to...*
- *There is an interesting finding in this research about.... However, there is insufficient discussion of exactly what this finding means and its implications.*
- *This discussion could be expanded to explain...*
- *The author could strengthen the paper by...*
- *The paper would be significantly improved with the addition of more details about...*
- *The abstract is very lengthy and goes into detailed accounts that are best suited for the article's main discussion sections. As such, I suggest the author reduces this section to keep only the most important elements.*
- *To make this paper publishable, the author needs to respond to the following substantive points...*

Linguistic alterations

- *This paper would benefit from some closer proofreading. It includes many linguistic errors (e.g. agreement of verbs) that at times make it difficult to follow. It may be useful to engage a professional English language editor following a restructure of the paper.*
- *The paper would benefit from stylistic changes to the way it has been written for a stronger, clearer, and more compelling argument.*
- *There are a few sentences that need rephrasing for clarity.*

STEP 4 Make a recommendation

Once you've read the paper and have assessed its quality, you need to make a recommendation to the editor about publication. The specific decision types used by a journal will vary, but the key decisions are:

- **Accept.** The paper is suitable for publication in its current form.
- **Minor revision.** The paper will be ready for publication after light revisions. Please list the revisions you would recommend the author makes.
- **Major revision.** The paper needs substantial changes such as expanded data analysis, widening of the literature review, or rewriting sections of the text.
- **Reject.** The paper isn't suitable for publication with this journal, or the revisions are too fundamental for the submission to continue being considered in its current form.

Revisions

When authors make revisions to their article, they're asked to submit a list of changes and any comments for the reviewers. The revised version is usually returned to the original reviewer if possible. The reviewer is then asked to affirm whether the revisions are satisfactory.

What are the ethical guidelines for peer reviewers?

All peer reviewers must follow these ethical guidelines for Taylor & Francis journal articles in review:

- Reviewers must give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted. They should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).
- Reviewers must declare any conflict of interest before agreeing to review a manuscript. This includes any relationship with the author that may bias their review.
- Reviewers must keep the peer review process confidential. They must not share information or correspondence about a manuscript with anyone outside of the peer review process.
- Reviewers should provide a constructive, comprehensive, evidenced, and appropriately substantial peer review report.
- Reviewers must avoid making statements in their report which might be construed as impugning any person's reputation.
- Reviewers should make all reasonable effort to submit their report and recommendation on time. They should inform the editor if this is not possible.
- Reviewers should call to the journal editor's attention any significant similarity between the manuscript under consideration and any published paper or submitted manuscripts of which they are aware.

Taylor & Francis recommend that reviewers also adhere to the [COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#).

Read key findings from our white paper research - [Peer review: a global view](#).