



Taylor & Francis Group
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EDITORRESOURCES

Supporting Taylor & Francis journal editors

Managing the peer review process



INTRODUCTION

This page looks at a range of options to help you find and retain reviewers, including using submission systems, engaging the editorial board, supporting and rewarding reviewers.

Contents

What's the role of editors in the peer review process?

Editors oversee the peer review process from start to finish. When they receive a manuscript, they carry out initial checks before sending it to review. Editors will consider the following aspects:

- Is the manuscript good enough for peer review?
- Does it conform to Aims & Scope, style guidelines, and Instructions for Authors?
- Does it make a significant contribution to the existing literature?

Unsuitable manuscripts may be rejected without peer review at the editor's discretion. If suitable, editors will send manuscripts out for peer review.

They then assign the manuscript to the right associate editor, and find appropriate reviewers. It is also the editor's responsibility to ensure ethical integrity during the process.

After the peer review, the editor will recommend a decision based on the reports they receive. The author will be informed of the decision and may then revise the paper until it's suitable for publication.

What to expect during the peer review process and why it takes time

As an editor, you'll appreciate the amount of effort that goes into the peer review process. Unfortunately, manuscripts don't simply go into the peer review system and come out the other end with a decision to accept, revise or reject.

For one, there are many people involved in the process, such as:

- You as an editor
- A team of associate editors
- An administrator
- The reviewers
- The Electronic Editorial Systems Team
- Your Taylor & Francis Managing Editor

For another, there's plenty of intricate parts to keep everyone busy. Taking care of the initial checks, assigning the right associate editor, finding enough willing reviewers, assigning reviewers, and checking for ethical issues. Not to mention the actual task of writing the review. It's no wonder that peer review takes time.

Reviewers are the lifeblood of any journal. Peer review requires independent scrutiny by suitable experts and it's this that academic journals offer in terms of "value added".

The review process is generally the slowest part of the publication process. How can you make it more effective and efficient? Focus your efforts on good time management and supplying high-quality reviews.

It's best not to request more reviews than required. While this may decrease review times, it is at the cost of overburdening the finite pool of reviewers.

As an editor, being aware of the following potential delays can help you limit their effects:

- Difficulty in finding appropriate reviewers
- Delayed response from reviewers
- Unhelpful review reports. Reviews that are a single sentence or paragraph are unhelpful to authors or editors. A normal review report should be two to three pages in length, sometimes longer.

REMIND REVIEWERS

Peer reviewers can delay the process if they don't respond promptly. You can send reviewers automatic reminders or add a personal touch with an email. Remind them of the importance of their review report and check if they are still able to provide one. If they can't, ask them to recommend someone who might be willing to review the paper instead.

By reminding them that you can assign the review to someone else, it may provoke a response. Either they are able to complete the review on time or they're happy for you to reassign it.

Read our step-by-step guide on [how to become a peer reviewer](#).

How to find and retain reviewers

USING PEER REVIEW SYSTEMS

You can avoid or lessen delays in the peer review process by growing and strengthening your pool of potential reviewers. You can do this via peer review systems and engaging with your editorial board.

SET PRE-DEFINED KEYWORDS

One of the easiest ways to find peer reviewers is to use keywords and/or classifications. Journals often let authors submit their own keywords, meaning they can define their own areas of expertise. Journal editorial teams use this information to locate suitable reviewers for each manuscript.

They can search using the journal's own database, or specially-designed software, facilitated by PubMed to cast the net further. When implementing a pre-defined list of keywords on your journal, consider two things:

- First, ensure the list of keywords is as extensive as possible;
- Second, decide if this should be a compulsory field during submission.

Read more on [how predefined keywords can help you find new reviewers](#).

SET SEARCH PREFERENCES

Searching for and selecting reviewers is a crucial part of the editorial process. Using the tools at your disposal within your ScholarOne system can save you time.

At the “select reviewer” step of the workflow is the option to “Set my search preferences”. This is a way to predetermine and save your own preferences for how you want the search results to appear. This ensures that future searches give you the information you need to efficiently select reviewers for a particular manuscript.

The default setting for search results when selecting reviewers displays:

- The number of review assignments an individual has currently and has had in the past twelve months;
- The number of days since their last review; and
- Their average R-score (a rating metric for reviewers).

Read more on [how to set your search preferences](#) on ScholarOne to find reviewers.

USE REVIEWER LOCATOR TOOLS

Reviewer locator tools help match submissions to suitable reviewers by drawing information from extensive databases of researchers. This makes the process of finding reviewers for manuscripts much easier.

- **Reviewer Locator on ScholarOne.** Once a paper is submitted, the Reviewer Locator automatically searches for reviewers based on a manuscript's keywords and abstract.
- **Reviewer Discovery on Editorial Manager.** This tool finds matches based on how closely the topics reflected in the article's title and abstract correlate with ProQuest scholar profiles.

Find out more on more fast and simple ways to [find new reviewers for your journal](#).

ASSESS YOUR REVIEWER LIST REGULARLY

You should regularly check your reviewer list on submission systems to prevent it from becoming outdated. If your list contains willing, reliable and able reviewers, you can enrich your journal's peer review process. In turn, this will generate better quality reviews and reduce your review times.

Run the Performance Report once or twice a year to see who your best reviewers are so you can reward them. You can also weed out the reviewers that never reply or don't return agreed reviews. In such cases, the "reviewer" role can even be expired so that they no longer show when searching for reviewers.

Once a reviewer has completed their report, send them a thank you letter. You can also prompt reviewers to update their details and keywords. Accurate and updated keywords ensure that the keyword match tool stays effective.

Read more on how to use your peer review submission system to [make the most of your reviewer list](#).

ENGAGING THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Your editorial board is a great source for feedback, ideas and recommendations. Engaging them in the peer review process will help you improve the efficiency for peer review and expand your reviewer pool.

- Ask the editorial board to filter out papers that are immediately inappropriate, whether on quality or topic. This helps to reduce wasted time.
- Add topics and keywords to each board member to define their subject interest and expertise.
- Invite board members to review papers based on their subject specialism.
- Encourage board members to recruit reviewers via networking events and conferences. Conference presenters are often useful to approach as potential reviewers or authors.
- Encourage board members to engage early-career researchers and increase the diversity of your reviewer pool.

REVIEWER SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

Reviewers invest a huge amount of time and expertise in the peer review process. It's crucial that they feel supported and recognized in their role. There are many things in place at Taylor & Francis to ensure this, including:

- **Reviewer guidelines.** We put together detailed instructions on what to expect during the peer review process, how to write review reports, and ethical guidelines for reviewers. Find out more [here](#).
- **Reviewer certificate.** We've created a certificate of recognition to serve as a formal acknowledgment of a reviewer's role in the peer review process of a journal. Reviewers can request the certificate from their Taylor & Francis contact. They can present it to employers, their institution, or simply hang it on the office wall! A reviewer confirmation letter is also available upon request.
- **Free access.** Making reviewers feel valued and supported is paramount to ensuring the ongoing success of the journals Taylor & Francis publishes. Many of our journals now give peer reviewers 30-days' free access to Taylor & Francis journal content upon agreeing to review. This provides reviewers with resources to assist in the creation of quality reviews.
- **"Thanks to reviewers" lists.** Reviewers are key to the success of a journal and its wider community. This is why many Taylor & Francis journals publish a formal "thank you list" of reviewers each year. If you don't already do this and would like to start, talk to your Taylor & Francis contact.

- **30% book discount for reviewers.** We are pleased to offer all our reviewers a discount on their purchase of Taylor & Francis Group books. This includes those under the Routledge, CRC Press, Garland Science, Psychology Press, and Focal Press imprints. Please get in touch with your editorial contact for more details.
- **Publons.** We've recently extended our partnership with Publons to 250 journal titles across a range of subject areas. Now, more of our reviewers can get recognition for their valuable contributions to academic research. Through Publons, researchers can showcase a complete record of their reviewing activity as evidence of their subject-area expertise. They can also earn "merit" points for their contributions.

Find out more on [how to support and recognize peer reviewers](#) with Publons.

Ethics in peer review

REVIEWER BIAS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As a fundamental step of the peer review process, editors need to select appropriate reviewers for each manuscript. Ideally, chosen reviewers will be experts in their field and have significant area-specific knowledge on the manuscript's topic. But why do editors also need to consider the ethics behind their choice of reviewer?

To ensure a fair review, editors should check potential reviewers to identify any conflicts of interest which may lead to bias. For example, you should examine a reviewer's author history and institution to see whether they have been a recent collaborator with, or worked at the same organization as, the author.

Preferably, the reviewer should not have worked with the author in the last three years. If they have recently collaborated with the author or share the same affiliation, this may constitute a potential conflict of interest, and subsequently result in a biased review.

See here for more information on [conflicts of interest](#).

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID THIS?

Before agreeing to review a paper, reviewers must declare any conflicts of interest. This includes any relationship with the author that may potentially bias their review. If they do, an alternative reviewer can be assigned.

When submitting their manuscript, the author's cover letter may outline reviewers that they don't want to review their paper. This can help the editor find any potential conflicts of interest, and assist them in selecting appropriate reviewers.

Alternatively, authors may choose to include a list of suggested reviewers. This may pose a risk of reviewer bias, so we recommend that editors select their own reviewers. To minimize the possibility of bias, we have removed the "Preferred Reviewers" function from our ScholarOne Manuscripts and Editorial Manager sites. See [here](#) for further information on this.

CO-AUTHOR VERIFICATION

Unethical authorship practices have become increasingly common in academia in recent years. Inappropriate listing of someone as a co-author may be innocent. It could be due to a misunderstanding over what counts as a contribution worthy of authorship credit as opposed to an acknowledgment. However, unethical practices such as “gift authorship” raise serious concerns for journal editors.

The [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#) defines gift authorship as “when somebody who has made little or no contribution to a research project or publication is included as an author”. This practice is often a benign mistake. For example, an inexperienced author may believe a co-author credit is necessary if their work builds on a more senior figure’s research.

Less innocently, researchers may add academic heavyweight co-authors to their paper in the belief that reviewers will judge it more favorably. Both practices are inappropriate. Careful checking of co-author details is the first step toward educating inexperienced academics on correct practices.

HOW TO MANAGE CO-AUTHOR VERIFICATION

To prevent delays, double-check the validity of all co-authors’ contact details at the submission stage. If you spot any disputes or inconsistencies, you can refer back to the authors for resolution before investing editor time. After all, it is the Corresponding Author’s responsibility to ensure that all co-authors consent to being named as such before submission for peer review.

The ScholarOne submission system can send an email alert to each listed co-author when a new manuscript is submitted. This email notifies them that a paper has been submitted in their name. This presents a valuable opportunity for authors to respond if they have been named on a paper without their approval. As such, we encourage editors to enable this feature if it isn’t already in place.

If the co-author email address is incorrect, or “dead”, the alert will not send. In such cases, a delivery failure notification or “email bounce-back” will be generated. If you receive one of these “bounce-back” emails, ask the submitting author for a current, valid email address for the co-author. Preferably, they should supply contact details for the co-author’s institutional address.

What if a paper has only the submitting author named in the Co-Author List but additional names in the manuscript itself? In this case, unsubmit the paper and return it to the corresponding author, asking them for full contact details for each co-author.

Unsubmitting a paper is not the same as rejecting it. The submission form and manuscript documents will all be saved in their Author Centre under “Unsubmitted Manuscripts”. This allows the author to add any missing details before resubmitting the paper.

CHECKING CO-AUTHOR DETAILS IN SCHOLARONE

[How do you double-check co-author details in ScholarOne?](#) What action should you take if the information given by the Corresponding Author is wrong? Here is the step-by-step guide.

If the co-authors are missing from the manuscript details in ScholarOne:

- Click the “Manuscript Files” tab to unsubmit the paper, returning it to the corresponding author.
- In the accompanying email, explain the reasons behind your decision to unsubmit. Outline the steps they should take to correct any problems and resubmit the paper.

If the co-authors’ contact details are incorrect, there are author email delivery failures in the journal inbox, or the co-authors’ email addresses appear to belong to the corresponding author:

- [Email the corresponding author](#) requesting the correct contact details of the co-authors.

If the co-authors have been added, removed, or rearranged from the authors’ list of a revised or accepted manuscript:

- The corresponding author should include in their cover letter the reason why an author should be added or removed, or why the names need to be rearranged.
- The co-authors should provide a written confirmation that they agree with the addition, removal, or rearrangement of authors.

All correspondence should be recorded in the Audit Trail in ScholarOne.

The following ethical guidelines for editors are also available from the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#):

- [Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct](#)
- [Text recycling guidelines for editors](#)
- [A short guide to ethical editing for new editors](#)
- [Guidance for editors: research, audit and service evaluations](#)
- [Journals’ best practices for ensuring consent for publishing medical case reports: guidance from COPE](#)