

Steps in Editorial Process

- 1) Manuscript processed either automatically by system, by production team, or editorial assistant (society journals) and sent to editor-in-chief
- 2) Editor-in-chief makes decision without review (some journals) or assigns subject/handling editor (who can also reject without review)
- 3) Handling editor suggests reviewers
- 4) Reviewers invited (slowest and most unpredictable part of process); if not enough reviewers accept, additional reviewers assigned/invited
- 5) Reviewers submit reviews
- 6) Handling editor makes recommendations based on reviewers comments and their own assessment
- 7) Editor in chief makes final decision (e.g. accept, potentially accept after revisions, reject, reject may submit)
- 8) Revised version goes through same process but handling editors can either send out for review again (same or new reviewers) or make decision themselves
- 9) Final accepted version sent to production office

How to Make Sure your Paper Gets Reviewed

1) Abstract

- Provide overall importance of subject/background in 1-2 sentences
- Clearly identify a **gap in knowledge**
- State objectives explicitly
- Describe methods in sufficient detail that reader knows how objectives were addressed (long abstract) OR describe overall approach/ emphasise novel methods (high impact or short)
- Describe sufficient results that reader understands novel contribution
- Draw conclusions that are understandable just by reading abstract
- End with a broader conclusion that goes **beyond single study system**

2) Cover letter

- Convincing case for what is novel rather than rewriting abstract

3) Breadth of take-home message (abstract, aims, conclusions)

4) If referring to related work, provide explicit traceable paper citations

5) English language/editing/grammar/logical flow of information

6) Journal remit

7) Instructions for authors

Most Common Reasons for Rejection

- 1) Novelty and importance not made clear (gaps in knowledge)
- 2) Scope too limited (focus on single study system without “bigger” picture question)
- 3) Subject area outside remit/target audience of journal
- 4) Language not at a standard to allow efficient review of the science
- 5) Inadequate response to reviewers

How to Write a Response Letter

- 1) Cover letter – overview of changes made
- 2) Rebuttal/response letter – detailed comments in relation to **every** point raised by reviewers and editor (including new/original line numbers, where relevant)
- 3) Justify any disagreements (“I disagree” not convincing)
- 4) If reviewer/editor thinks something is unclear, it should be rewritten
- 5) Make sure changes are made to manuscript, not just justified in cover letter
- 6) Use tracked changes or highlight changes in manuscript and submit clean version

How to Write a Review

- 1) Purely positive or purely negative unhelpful
- 2) Include details or examples for major changes requested (e.g. “shorten by 25%” not helpful)
- 3) Include line numbers, where relevant
- 4) If recommending rejecting, make sure that criticisms are clear in comments to authors, not just to editor
- 5) If you accept a review but then can't complete it, let editorial office know before deadline, rather than just not submitting
- 6) If language/grammatical editing required, point out to editorial office rather than rewriting

How do I choose a journal (it's not just about impact factor)?

- 1) Target audience/scope/subjects covered
- 2) Time taken for decision (e.g. are there decisions without review?; steps in editorial process)
- 3) Acceptance rates
- 4) Open access policies
- 5) Cost (page charges, journal access charges)
- 6) Word/reference limits
- 7) Data accessibility policies
- 8) Society run or “professional” (e.g. personal contact/ reputation)
- 9) Size of editorial board (e.g. personal contact with small team or “pool” of editors)
- 10) Social media presence (e.g. twitter, podcasts, altmetrics)
- 11) Unsolicited reviews/special issues?