

Editor guidelines

Frontiers' [collaborative peer review](#) is unique and quality-focused. Read on for a guide for reviewers on what to expect of our peer review process.

What is the Frontiers peer review model?

Frontiers operates a single-blind model during the review process. This means the reviewers know who the authors are in order to offer a full assessment within the context of their research and to ensure they can avoid any potential competing interests in accepting a review invitation.

Frontiers also believes that reviewers should be acknowledged for their work in conducting peer review. We believe in transparency and ensuring no bias during the peer review process. This is why we disclose the name of all endorsing reviewers upon publication, for every article we publish.

For authors

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Our peer review platform is collaborative: it unites authors, reviewers, and the handling editor in a direct online dialog, enabling quick iterations and facilitating consensus. Editors and reviewers work with the authors to improve their manuscript.

Independent review phase

Once a reviewer accepts the invitation to review, they are sent an email with a link to the online review forum. In the review forum, they can access and review the manuscript and supporting documents. During this first review phase the reviewers assess the paper independently from each other and the authors.

The review is completed by answering a review questionnaire provided in the review forum, and tailored for each article type (original research, review, study protocol, clinical trial, etc). When submitting their review report, a reviewer will also submit their recommendation to the editor. At this stage they are able to directly endorse the manuscript and finalize their review process, should the manuscript meet our acceptance criteria.

Once all reviewers have submitted their review report, the handling editor is responsible for reviewing their report comments before the next phase of the process begins: the interactive review.

Interactive review phase

Once the interactive review phase is activated, authors are notified and are able to view and respond to reviewers' comments within the review forum. Reviewers are notified when the author has replied in full, and/or resubmitted their manuscript in line with reviewer comments.

If needed, reviewers can enter a dialog with the author to request clarifications or further revisions. They can also access and comment on other reviewers' review reports.

If the reviewer feels the authors have made the required changes and the paper is suitable for publication, they may endorse it. Alternatively, if it is felt that the authors have not or cannot bring the paper up to standard, reviewers can recommend that it be rejected.

How to peer review

Reviewers are the crucial facilitator between the author and the handling editor. From a position of expertise, reviewers guide and enable fellow researchers to get their work out into the world, in the best condition it can be.

Before accepting the invitation

When you receive an invitation to review, it is important to consider the following points before accepting.

Is the manuscript within my expertise?

Think about whether the manuscript is suitably within your area of expertise. If not, please decline the invite, and consider helping us by suggesting alternative relevant experts.

Do I have the time? We strive to keep our peer review process efficient and as such reviewers are requested to complete their reports within 7 days after they accept the invite. You should let the editorial office know if you aren't able to provide a review but may be able to participate at another time.

Do I have a conflict of interest? Once the invitation is accepted, as a reviewer you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding conflicts of interest to establish any relationship with the author(s) of the manuscript which may make it inappropriate for you to review. Conflicts of interest are assessed on a case by case basis and may not be disqualifying, so please disclose all answers in full. Further details on this are available [here](#).

Respond to the invitation We ask reviewers to respond to the review invitation as soon as they can. You are of

insufficient to complete their review, or if there will be a delay to the deadline after the invitation has been accepted, they can contact the editorial office. We will be happy to assist.

During peer review

Before a manuscript is sent for peer review, our research integrity team and the handling editor will already have carried out initial quality checks.

The aims of our reviewers should always be to:

- focus on the quality of the science objectively
- collaborate towards improvement and think constructively
- help the author and editor understand what is needed with clear comments.

Below are our tips for ensuring a quality report is produced.

What to do

Respect the scope Authors provide a 'contribution to the field' statement with their manuscript to explain the article's intended scope and relevance. Keep the focus on what the manuscript is aiming to do, even if your expertise extends in a related direction. You should avoid recommending authors vastly expand the scope of the manuscript (e.g. "you only dealt with x, you need to deal with y"), or

not asked to assess the author, only the manuscript. Also, it is not necessary to flag small copy-editing errors: our production team will ensure those are fixed during typesetting. Our processes ensure you should focus solely on the research itself.

Provide constructive feedback Comments should seek to recommend reasonable improvements, in a polite and impersonal tone. Show professional courtesy by thinking about what you would want to receive on a paper of your own. And if it is good, say so – and also say why!

Consider field specifics Are there elements of the research specific to the field you work in? If so, apply your expertise to give feedback on these. It will be helpful to all involved in the manuscript's review process.

What not to do

Don't be vague or too brief Authors find precise and detailed feedback extremely helpful, and this tends to result in a timely and smoother review process. Whereas a brief report will often lead to additional questions from authors. Make sure recommendations and decisions are explained clearly. You should make good use of the detailed questionnaire provided in the collaborative review platform to provide a clear assessment.

Don't leave out key points in your initial report The initial report should be thorough and provide all the necessary feedback upfront. While it is possible that further revisions to the paper will bring up

highly valued.

Don't drop out of the peer review To ensure an efficient process for all involved, please try to submit your responses on time. If you need to request an extension or to withdraw from the review process you can do this directly in the review forum at any time, or contact the editorial office for support. Try to place yourself in the authors' shoes, as they anxiously await feedback on their submission.

Keep in touch

Encountering any issues during review or have any concerns with the manuscript? Need assistance using our review platform? Need to request an extension to submit your review? For these or any other inquiries or updates, do not hesitate to contact your journal's office.

After peer review: recognizing reviewers

Reviewers who endorse a manuscript for publication are recognized for their work by being named on the published article. The names are listed alongside the editor's both on the published article page, and the article final files.

But it is important to remember that if a reviewer recommends the rejection of a manuscript, or withdraws from the review process, their name will not be made available to the authors and is not published alongside the manuscript.