



KNE PUBLISHING

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**A GUIDE TO PEER  
REVIEW**

# WHAT IS PEER REVIEW

Peer review is the process by which independent and unbiased experts evaluate scholarly manuscripts to help determine whether they are suitable for publication. Peer review processes play an essential role in scholarly research and communications, maintaining the integrity of scientific and academic research outputs by identifying inadequate or faulty research.

When a manuscript is submitted for publication, the editor of the journal or book series sends it to be evaluated by an expert in the relevant field. The reviewer checks submission for originality, coherence, contribution to the field, and alignment with journal (or book series) scope. The reviewer offers a summary of their assessment for the editor and author, identifying potential concerns and providing constructive suggestions for improvement where necessary.

## HOW IT WORKS



ARTICLE  
SUBMITTED  
TO EDITOR



EDITOR  
LOOKS FOR  
REVIEWER



ARTICLE  
ASSIGNED TO  
REVIEWER



REVIEWER  
EVALUATES &  
REPORTS



EDITOR  
MAKES  
DECISION



EDITOR  
NOTIFIES  
AUTHOR

# VALUE OF PEER REVIEW

Peer review plays an essential role in scholarly communication, maintaining the integrity and quality of academic and scientific publications, and benefitting the entire scholarly ecosystem.



It helps **authors** to improve their work by highlighting possible weaknesses and offering constructive suggestions for potential improvements.



It helps ensure **editorial decisions** are based on expert, independent and unbiased assessments.



It supports **journals** in publishing the best research which is appropriate for scope, aims and audience.



It supports the professional development of the **reviewers**, giving advance access to new research, offering valuable networking opportunities, and improving analytic and writing skills.

## WHAT EDITORS LOOK FOR IN A REVIEWER

When considering the best person for the job, editors have a wide range of criteria, but there are four things which most editors look for in their ideal peer reviewer:

- ✓ **EXPERT** in their field (ideally having published in this area)
- ✓ **UNBIASED** with no conflicts of interest
- ✓ **AVAILABLE** and capable of delivering the review in a timely manner
- ✓ **CONSTRUCTIVE** rather than destructive, providing useful feedback rather than negative criticism

### PEER REVIEW FACTS

- 33% of peer reviews are conducted in the US
- 1 review is performed for every 2.4 invitations to review
- 70% of reviewers reject invitations on grounds that the article is outside of their area of expertise

*(2018 Publons report)*

# SHOULD YOU AGREE TO REVIEW?

## Do you have the necessary subject knowledge?

The value of the review for author and editor lies in the specialist knowledge and insights provided by the reviewer. Don't agree to review unless you feel you are the best person for the job.

## Do you have time to conduct the review?

Journals and authors both have publication deadlines, and it is important you can deliver your review in a timely fashion. Don't agree to review if you know you will be unable to deliver it on time.

## Are there any conflicts of interest which might influence your review?

Reviews are supposed to be unbiased and independent. If you think there might be a conflict of interest, inform the editor.

## Do you know the journal?

Predatory journals can also request peer reviews, and you might not want to be involved with publications of this type. Use helpful resources such as **Think.Check.Submit.** to evaluate unknown journals.

## Do you fully understand the journal scope?

A key part of the reviewer's role is to support the editor in deciding whether the submission is a good fit for the journal, aligning with the scope, and matching the expectations of the target readership. Make sure you are able to do this.

## Do you know what is required?

Confirm the type of review the editor wants, whether they have guidance documents or a checklist, and how they wish to receive the review. Then make your decision.

# TIPS FOR PEER REVIEWERS

Editors will have individual criteria and checklists, and reporting guidelines can vary by subject field and type of study. However, there are four essential questions which should form the basis of your review:

## Does it contribute to the field?



## Is the research properly conducted?



## Is the research properly reported & analysed?



## Is it suitable for the journal?



## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What does this article contribute to the field?
- Is this contribution properly identified and presented?
- Is there evidence of efficient and effective research, and is this research properly discussed?
- Does the discussion reflect the underlying research?
- Does the study lie within the journal scope and is it appropriate for the target readership?

## PROBLEMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

- The article is similar or identical to something you've seen in another journal
- The language is poor and detracts from the impact of the argument
- Sections required by the journal are missing
- Lack of recent and relevant references for the topic of study
- Lack of substantiating evidence (either data or relevant scholarly studies)

## WRITING UP YOUR REVIEW

- Keep criticism constructive and unbiased
- Avoid personal or offensive comments
- Be succinct
- Do not communicate directly with the authors
- Deliver your report on time

## YOUR SUGGESTION FOR THE EDITOR

- Accept without revisions
- Accept with revisions
- Revise and resubmit
- Not suitable for the journal

## PEER REVIEW FACTS

- On average it takes 5 hours to review and report on an article
- Reviewer reports average 400-500 words
- The average time it takes for reviewers to submit a review report is 16.4 days

*(2018 Publons report)*



## NEXT STEPS

Reviewing should be part of a researcher's life, improving personal skills and knowledge, contributing to the publication of new developments and discoveries, and supporting the entire scholarly ecosystem.

### Becoming a peer reviewer

If you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer, visit our research platform – we have lots of journals across multiple disciplines whose editorial boards are looking for reviewers.

Visit [www.knepublishing.com](http://www.knepublishing.com) or contact us at [publishing@knowledgee.com](mailto:publishing@knowledgee.com) for more help.

### Training peer reviewers

If you, your editorial board, or your institution want support in training peer reviewers, our **Essential Skills for Peer Review** course can help you develop a pool of expert and engaged peer reviewers.

Contact us at [training@knowledgee.com](mailto:training@knowledgee.com) for more information.

## OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

- Journal's own review guidelines
- Subject-specific reporting guidelines such as those produced by Consort and Equator Network
- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
- European Association of Science Editors (EASE)
- World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)
- Think.Check.Submit.
- Publons

## ABOUT KNE PUBLISHING

KnE Publishing is an independent, scholar-led Open Access publisher. Our mission is to accelerate and improve knowledge sharing and to drive scholarly discoveries and innovations in emerging knowledge economies. We have provided world-class publishing and consultancy services to researchers and academic institutions across the globe since 2016.



KnE Publishing helps institutions and individual scholars to unlock the full value of their research. Our Open Access digital publishing platform provides a global gateway for research, with readers in over 160 countries around the world, and contributors from over 65 countries. We are a trusted partner for Crossref and members of OASPA, ORCID and The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers as well as signatories of The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the United Nations' SGD Publisher's Compact.



# CONTACT US TODAY TO GET STARTED!

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