Oryx

Reviewers

If you have agreed to carry out a peer review for *Oryx*, please submit your critique via your ScholarOne account. Note that when submitting your review online, you can easily claim credit for it on Web of Science.

Submit peer review

Guidelines for reviewers

Peer review—the process in which fellow researchers critique a piece of research—lies at the heart of the scholarly literature. The integrity of this extensive literature depends largely on the checking and verification that has been provided by peer reviewers down the ages. For the individual researcher, peer review is a type of community service. This service is voluntary and unpaid—payment would potentially result in a conflict of interest—and generally regarded as an integral part of a researcher's professional life. If you are invited to peer review a manuscript there are several matters to consider, especially if it is the first time you have been invited to carry out a review. This brief guide summarizes some essential characteristics of the process of peer review and provides advice to help you decide whether or not to accept an invitation to review.

Types of peer review
The value of peer review
How to peer review

Types of peer review

A number of peer review models are employed by journals, each with potential advantages and disadvantages. The Editor and editorial board of each journal chooses the system they deem appropriate for their journal and their field of endeavour, and may from time to time reevaluate the system they use.

Single blind—in which the reviewers are aware of the identity of the authors but not vice versa. The advantage of this system is that knowing the identity of the authors allows a reviewer to provide extra support and advice in cases where it could be deemed necessary. The disadvantage of this system is that a biased reviewer could potentially hide behind the anonymity provided (although one of the roles of an editor is to be aware of this possibility). In this system some reviewers may prefer to waive their anonymity, for ethical reasons, and will sign their review if the journal allows this.

Double blind—in which neither the reviewers nor authors are aware of each others' identities. The strength of this system is that it facilitates critique of a manuscript on its individual merit as presented rather than on any characteristics of the authors (such as their institution, nationality or gender). A potential disadvantage is that anonymity is not absolutely guaranteed (for example, matters such as the subject, the literature cited and the style of writing may nevertheless allow an

experienced peer reviewer to guess the identity of the authors). In addition, reviewers may not be aware of a potential conflict of interest that would be revealed by knowing the authors' identities.

Open—in which the identities of neither authors nor reviewers are hidden. This system may also be combined with the critiques being available online for any interested party to read, not solely the authors and reviewers. The advantages of this system are that, as the anonymity of the reviewers is automatically waived, there is additional encouragement to be polite, diplomatic and supportive. The disadvantages are that there may in some cases be genuine reasons for anonymity, such as if there has been profound intellectual conflict between the parties involved, or if a reviewer has concerns regarding potential retribution for a critical review. Such matters may be a disincentive to review under this model.

The value of peer review

Peer review has value for scholarship generally, by validating ideas and research, as well as for both authors and reviewers. Authors receive informed critiques of their research, ideas, writing and analyses. Reviewers receive early access to new research in their field, and credit for carrying out a review (to facilitate this, *Oryx* has partnered with Web of Science). The process of reviewing is in itself a challenge that can hone intellectual skills.

Authors, especially those early in their careers, may have an unfounded fear of peer review, fearing rejection. The critiques provided by peer reviewers—even if a journal declines to publish a manuscript—can nevertheless be of value for improving both research and writing.

How to peer review

Journal editors search for suitably qualified and knowledgeable peer reviewers in several ways, including using their own knowledge, and that of the journal's editorial board, of researchers with expertise in the subject, the journal's database of potential reviewers (which will include authors who have published in the journal), online databases of scholarly literature, the reference list of the manuscript under consideration, and reviewers suggested by the authors themselves.

Should I accept an invitation to review?

If you are invited to review a manuscript there are several points to consider:

1. Are you sufficiently acquainted with the research subject and/or location?
2. Are you knowledgeable of the methods used and of any statistical analyses employed?
3. Will you be able to set aside sufficient time to provide a detailed critique (a journal will set a deadline, typically in the order of 3 weeks, or 30 days, for example)?
4. Are there any potential conflicts of interest that preclude you from being able to offer an objective critique (e.g. you have worked with one or more of the authors, if it is single blind review, or suspect that you may have, if it is double blind review)?
5. Have you reviewed a previous version of the manuscript, perhaps for a different journal?

If the answer to points 1–3 are yes, and to points 4–5 no, then you are potentially in a position to provide a useful peer review.

With respect to point 1, you do not necessarily need to have a comprehensive knowledge of the research subject but you will need at least more than a passing acquaintance with the subject either generally or more specifically.

With respect to point 2, lack of knowledge of the statistical methods employed may not preclude you from being able to offer a critique if you are otherwise familiar with the subject. This is a matter that you could discuss with the Editor before committing yourself to providing a review.

With respect to point 3, it is a disservice to agree to review a manuscript and then later, having realized you cannot set aside the required time, to indicate that you will not be able to complete the review in a timely manner. This would result in a delay in communicating a decision to the authors, as the Editor will then have to seek an alternative reviewer.

With respect to point 4, a conflict of interest is anything material or personal that could potentially hinder you from providing an objective, unbiased review. Examples of matters that could be considered a conflict of interest include, but are not limited to: if you have worked or have been a co-author with one or more of the manuscript's authors (or suspect that you have), if you work for the same organization as one or more of the authors, or if you have had any intellectual conflict with one or more of the authors. If you discover a potential conflict of interest whilst carrying out a review, you should contact the Editor.

With respect to point 5, it would be wise to advise the Editor of the matter, as to review the manuscript again for a different journal may introduce bias.

How should I decline an offer to review?

If you decline to review a manuscript—it is perfectly reasonable to do so—it is helpful to indicate to the Editor, in a few words, why you are doing so (e.g. you are overly occupied with other commitments, you are in the field, you are currently reviewing a manuscript for another journal).

If you know that are not going to be available to carry out any peer reviews for a specific period of time, let the Editor know. The editorial office will then block out that time on the details they hold for you, preventing the Editor from contacting you again during that period. Alternatively, as most journals use an online manuscript handling system in which both authors and reviewers have accounts, you will normally be able to login to your account and block out the period when you will be unavailable.

Should you decline the offer to review, there are several ways in which you can nevertheless help the Editor (and, indirectly, the authors):

1. Decline the review promptly, so that the Editor can then seek an alternative reviewer without additional delays
2. Make suggestions for alternative reviewers, indicating in a few words their expertise, and providing their affiliations and e-mail addresses

How should I carry out a review?

The journal will provide you with instructions for carrying out the review. Typically, you will be required to respond briefly to a few specific questions, provide a free-form detailed critique, and a recommendation from a list of potential decisions (e.g. Accept, Minor Revision, Major Revision, Reject and Resubmit, or Reject).

A peer reviewer will be expected to comment on a range of matters that may include:

1. The degree of novelty
2. The suitability of the subject matter for the journal
3. The integrity and appropriateness of the research design
4. The appropriateness of the methods used and of any statistical analyses employed
5. The logical coherence of any analyses
6. Whether there are any ethical concerns regarding the research or of any collaborations (or lack of), and whether the research has abided by the journal's Code of Conduct (if it has one)
7. Whether the literature cited is appropriate and complete
8. The quality of the writing and of the language used
9. The quality, correctness and appropriateness of any figures, other illustrations and/or tables
10. Whether the text is overly long for the subject matter, or overly brief such that important details have not been included
11. The appropriateness of any supplementary material included

In providing a review, bear the following points in mind:

1. Be polite, diplomatic, supportive and constructive in your comments
2. Be respectful of points of view that are at odds with your own
3. Be mindful of the difficulties faced by authors whose first language is not English; focus your critique on the science and recommend English editing where appropriate
4. Be honest about matters that you are unable to comment on
5. Be specific if required; where necessary refer to particular lines/paragraphs of the text, to avoid any misunderstandings
6. Be clear, use plain language and avoid ambiguity

> Please note: To protect authors' rights and the confidentiality of their research, Oryx does not allow the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technologies such as ChatGPT or similar in the peer review and manuscript evaluation process.

Life can be unpredictable: if you realize that your provision of a critique is going to be delayed, let the Editor know promptly, and indicate a date by which you will be able to complete your review. This is a more helpful approach than ignoring e-mails from the Editor or editorial office. If you can confirm a date by which you will provide a review, the Editor will be able to inform the author(s) appropriately.