JOURNAL OF INVESTIGATIVE DERMATOLOGY

Tips for Reviewing

Peer review serves two purposes. First, it helps journal editors assess the quality and suitability of submissions and guides their decision to accept or reject manuscripts. Second, it helps authors improve their work. A great review addresses both goals.

A Great Reviewer Is:

- **Responsive**
  Respond to requests to review, even if you must decline.
- **Timely**
  Agree to review only if you can respond in the requested timeframe. If you require more time to complete the review, inform the editor before agreeing.
- **Knowledgeable**
  A reviewer should be able to address the manuscript's methods, statistics, and overall contribution to the literature.
- **Objective**
  Agree to review only if you can provide a review that addresses the science without influence by personal relationships or financial interest.
- **Familiar with the Journal's Scope and Audience**
  A primary goal of peer review is to determine the suitability of the work for the journal and its audience; knowledge of both is essential to provide guidance to the editor.
- **Discrete**
  The contents of a manuscript must remain confidential until publication. Do not share the manuscript with colleagues unless this is necessary to complete the review, and notify the editor of your intent to do so. Likewise, do not contact the authors or inform them of your participation in the review of their work, even after publication.
- **Collegial**
  The tone of your review should be polite and constructive.
- **Fair**
  Recommend additional experiments only if these are central to the manuscript and essential to make the manuscript suitable for publication. Your own curiosity or preferred methods do not justify recommending additional experiments.
- **Focused**
  Address the science; you do not need to copyedit the manuscript.

How to Write a Great Review:

1. First, in comments to both the authors and editors, summarize the main question the report addresses and provide some conceptual context; this helps the editor understand the content of the article, and it helps the authors understand your main take-away from the article (it may differ from their intended message).
2. Address the following:
    a. Is the question addressed relevant and important?
    b. Is the report of interest to the journal's readers?
    c. Is the methodology appropriate?
    d. Do the data support the conclusions?
    e. Is the report clearly written and well-organized?
    f. Does the report represent a significant advance to the field of knowledge?
3. Comments to the authors:
    a. Number your specific comments
    b. Divide your criticisms between major (essential to address for acceptance) and minor (non-essential or cosmetic and easily addressed)
    c. Support your comments with citations from the literature if appropriate, e.g., relevant prior work by others or conflicting studies
    d. Note whether the report complies with appropriate guidelines relevant to the submission (CONSORT for reporting randomized clinical trials, STARD for reporting diagnostic accuracy studies, MIAME for describing a microarray experiment, etc.)
    e. Avoid making a recommendation concerning acceptance or rejection
4. Comments to the editor:
    a. Give your reasoning for your recommendation (acceptance, revision and re-review, rejection)
    b. Note whether weaknesses are fatal (i.e., cannot be corrected and preclude publication) or addressable, and, if addressable, whether new experiments should be required
    c. If you lack expertise in an area, state this so the editor can invite reviewers with complementary expertise as needed.
    d. Your comments to the editor should be consistent with your comments to the authors. The authors should not get a more favorable impression of your assessment from the comments they receive than the editor does after reading your confidential comments.
    e. Mention any suspected ethical concerns (human subject or animal treatment, plagiarism, duplicate submission or publication)

Notify the Editorial Office if you realize a personal conflict of interest after you have agreed to review. Note whether you believe this disqualifies you as a reviewer.

Resources Used & Further Reading:

- COPE (2013) COPE ethical guidelines for peer reviewers. http://publicationethics.org/files/Ethical_guidelines_for_peer_reviewers_0.pdf (accessed 11-12-2014)
- Lucey B. Peer review: how to get it right – 10 tips. The Guardian Higher Education Network Blog. Published 27 September 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/sep/27/peer-review-10-tips-research-paper (accessed 11-11-2014)
- Marusic M, Sambunjak D, Marusic A (2005) Guide for peer reviewers of scientific articles in the Croatian Medical Journal. Croat Med J 46:326-332
- Might M. How to peer review. http://matt.might.net/articles/how-to-peer-review/ (accessed 11-11-2014)
- Miller B, Pevehouse J, Rogowski R, et al (2013) How to be a peer reviewer: A guide for recent and soon-to-be PhDs. PS: Political Science and Politics doi:10.1017/S104909651200128x
- Nicholas KA and Gordon W (2011) A Quick guide to writing a solid peer review. Eos 92:233-240