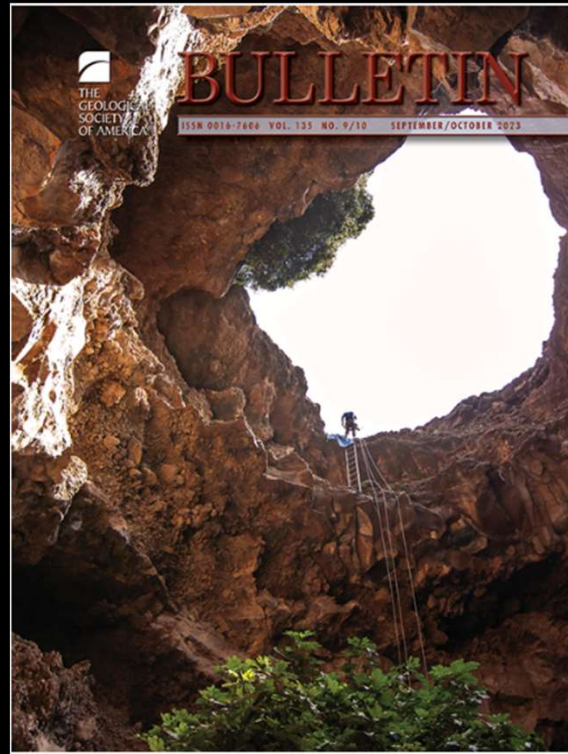
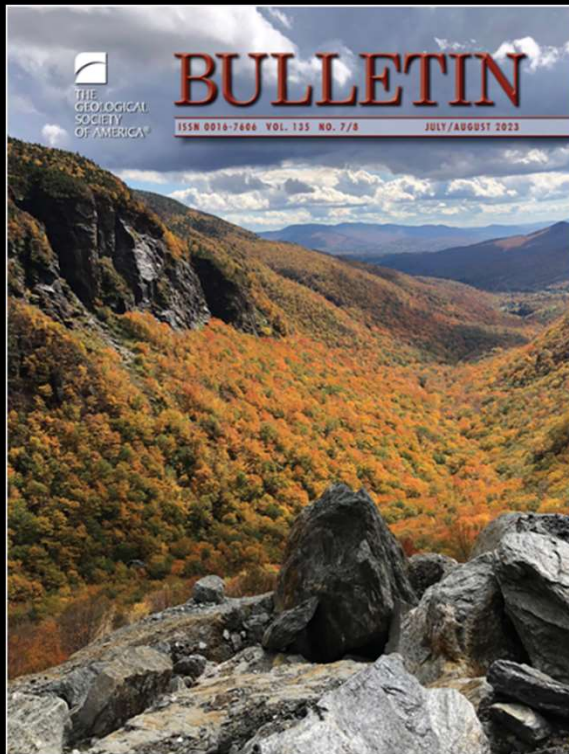




# Success in Publishing: Navigating the process Part 2: Submission and Review



**Robinson Cecil**

*California State University, Northridge*

*Associate Editor, GSA Bulletin*

*Associate Editor, Tectonics (AGU)*

*Modified from an awesome presentation developed by  
Rónadh Cox, Williams College*

# The steps to Success in Publishing discussed in this presentation:

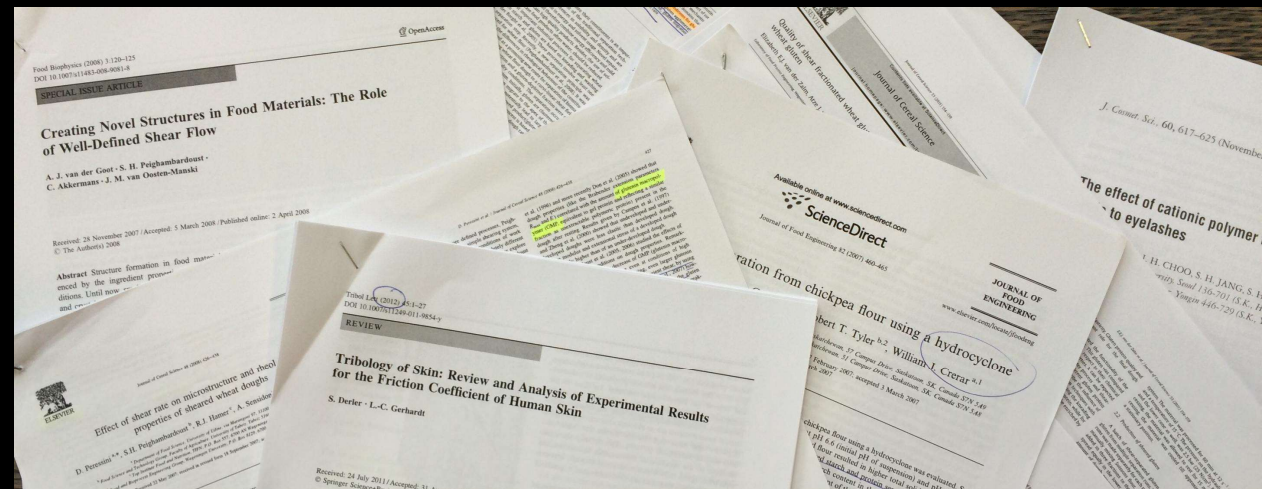
0) Pay attention to your writing (it's not all about the science) – as covered by Nancy

1) Pay attention to submission details.

2) Understand what happens after you click “submit”.

3) Respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to reviewers.

4) Review! It's your responsibility.



You've written what you think is a creative and well-articulated study, and you've identified a journal with the appropriate scope. NOW WHAT?

**STEP 0:** Go back and make sure that your manuscript is as good as it can be! Proofread again and again\*. Ask for help from co-authors. Your goal is to make the editors' and the reviewers' jobs as easy as possible.

Keep in mind that:

- It's hard for a reader to follow a paper that is poorly written, poorly prepared, or poorly thought through. *Double-check your introduction – does it do a good job of conveying the context and significance of your work?*
- Reviewers may misunderstand your points, and therefore may not be able to provide constructive criticism.
- If they are irritated with your poor writing, they may be skeptical of your science.
- Figures are really important! The quality of the science may be pre-judged by the quality of your figures.

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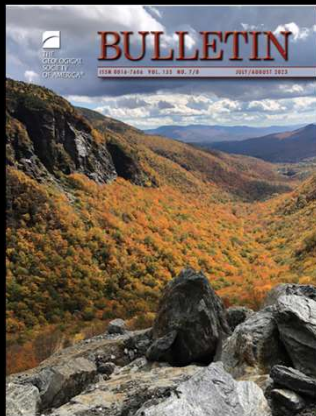
*\*time spent on the “front end” is time saved on the “back end”*

## STEP 1: Pay attention to submission details. Consult the journal's authorship guide.

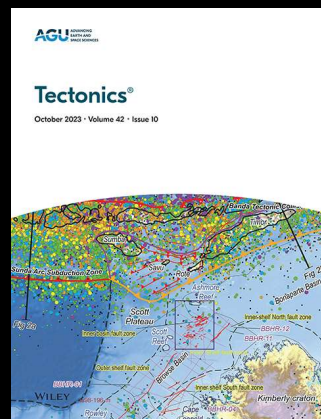
- Make note of the items that will need to be uploaded upon submission (often more than just one manuscript file!).
  - Cover Letter
  - **Manuscript file** (*Plain Language Abstract\**)
  - Separate files for each figure\*
  - Separate files for each table\*
  - Supplemental material
  - Suggested reviewers

*\*commonly required, but not always*

### Some examples of authorship guides:



[GSAB guide](#)



[Tectonics guide](#)



[EPSL guide](#)

## The Cover Letter – it matters

What to avoid: being vague and generic, not providing details.

Example of a poor cover letter:

Dear Editor,

Please accept submission of our manuscript titled “Best Thing Ever”. We would like to have it considered for publication in your journal. Please let me know your decision at your earliest convenience.

Best,

A. Researcher

## Key points to include in the cover letter:

1.  
Address editor  
by name, if you  
know it

2.  
Include the  
manuscript's  
title and the  
name of the  
journal

3.  
State that your  
paper has not  
been published /  
is not under  
consideration  
elsewhere

4.  
Briefly describe  
your research.  
Why is it  
important? Why  
will readers find  
it interesting?

5.  
Declare any  
conflicts of  
interest, or  
confirm there  
are none.

6.  
Include contact  
information.

*"...This paper conforms to the journal guidelines as laid out in the Information for Authors. We have no conflicts of interest."*

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1.  
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interest, or  
confirm there  
are none.

6.  
Include contact  
information.

## Avoid:

1. too much jargon / acronyms
2. Too much detail
3. Using abstract
4. Spelling / grammar errors

Keep it under a  
page!

## Supplemental Material

Keep in mind that putting your data in a supplemental table may be insufficient.

GSA states that all authors are required to permanently archive new data they use in papers published with GSA in trusted repositories that:

- Maintain open access to data
- Provide long-term preservation
- Use persistent and unique identifiers
- Register metadata
- Include quality assurance

<https://www.geosociety.org/gsa/pubs/dataPolicy.aspx>

Most journals have a **FAIR** (findable, accessible, interoperable, re-usable) data policy

**M** Magnetism Information Consortium (MagIC)  
Promoting information technology infrastructures for the international paleomagnetism community

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## Suggested Reviewers

Choose scientists with appropriate expertise, whom you think can give a fair evaluation of the work.

### Do not suggest:

- Collaborators & co-authors (within the last 5 years)
- Close friends
- Employers or employees
- Family members
- Institutional colleagues
- Advisor or advisee

In other words, anyone with a real or *\*perceived\** conflict of interest.

“If in doubt....leave them out!”

Unsure about conflicts or other ‘rules’ of publication? Check out the journal’s ethical guidelines!

AGU’s ethical guidelines:

<https://www.agu.org/Publish-with-AGU/Publish/AGU-Publications-Scientific-Ethics-and-Integrity>

GSA’s ethical guidelines:

[https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/gsa/pubs/Ethical\\_Guidelines.aspx](https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/gsa/pubs/Ethical_Guidelines.aspx)

Elsevier’s publishing ethics:

<https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies/publishing-ethics>

## **STEP 1:** Pay attention to submission details. Consult the journal's authorship guide.

- Gather contact information for all co-authors and make sure that names, titles, and affiliations are correct. You may need your co-authors' [ORCID](#)
- Follow guidelines for organization and style (*does the journal provide a template? Have you looked at recently published papers in that journal?*)
- Use the required file formats (when appropriate)
- **Provide a complete and correct reference list!**

### **Journal Article**

Arias, O., and Denyer, P., 1991, Estructura geológica de la región comprendida en las hojas topográficas Abras, Carraigres, Candelaria y Río Grande, Costa Rica: *Revista Geológica de América Central*, no. 12, p. 61–74.

Balco, G., Stone, J.O., and Mason, J.A., 2005, Numerical ages for Plio-Pleistocene glacial sediment sequences by  $^{26}\text{Al}/^{10}\text{Be}$  dating of quartz in buried paleosols: *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, v. 232, p. 179–191, doi:10.1016/j.epsl.2004.12.013.

Brown, J.R., Beroza, G.C., Ide, S., Ohta, K., and Shelly, D.R., 2009, Deep low-frequency earthquakes in tremor localize to the plate interface in multiple subduction zones: *Geophysical Research Letters*, v. 36, L19306, doi:10.1029/2009GL040027.

AGU follows APA reference style as found in the Publication Manual of the APA, latest edition. Please note that all sources cited in text, tables, and figures must appear in the reference list, and all entries in the reference list must be cited in text. References that are only cited in supporting information should also be included in the reference list of the paper and cited in text. Data created, used from others, and supports findings should be included in the Availability Statement and cited in the References sections. Software specific to the research should also be included and cited. See [Data and Software for Authors](#) for further guidance.

The Digital Object Identifier (DOI) is a required part of the citation for AGU journal articles. When they are known, DOIs should be included for non-AGU publications.

*From AGU's reference guide*

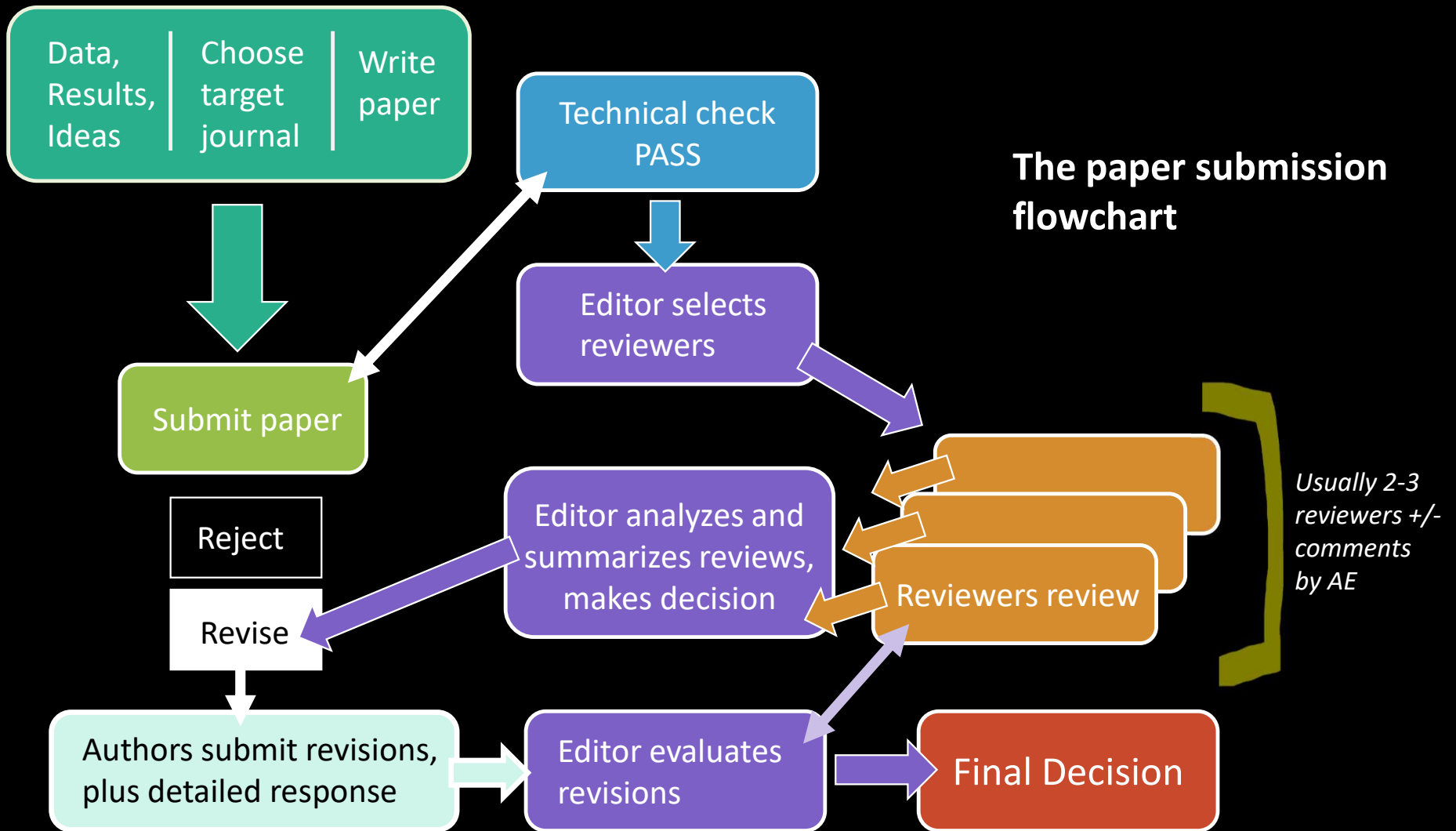
*Examples of journal article citations provided in GSA's reference guide*

**Step 2**: Understanding what happens after you click “submit”.

You’ve triple-checked your manuscript, made sure your figures were formatted correctly, written an amazing cover letter, and submitted your paper!

This may feel like the end, but in many ways, it’s only the beginning.

**What comes next?**

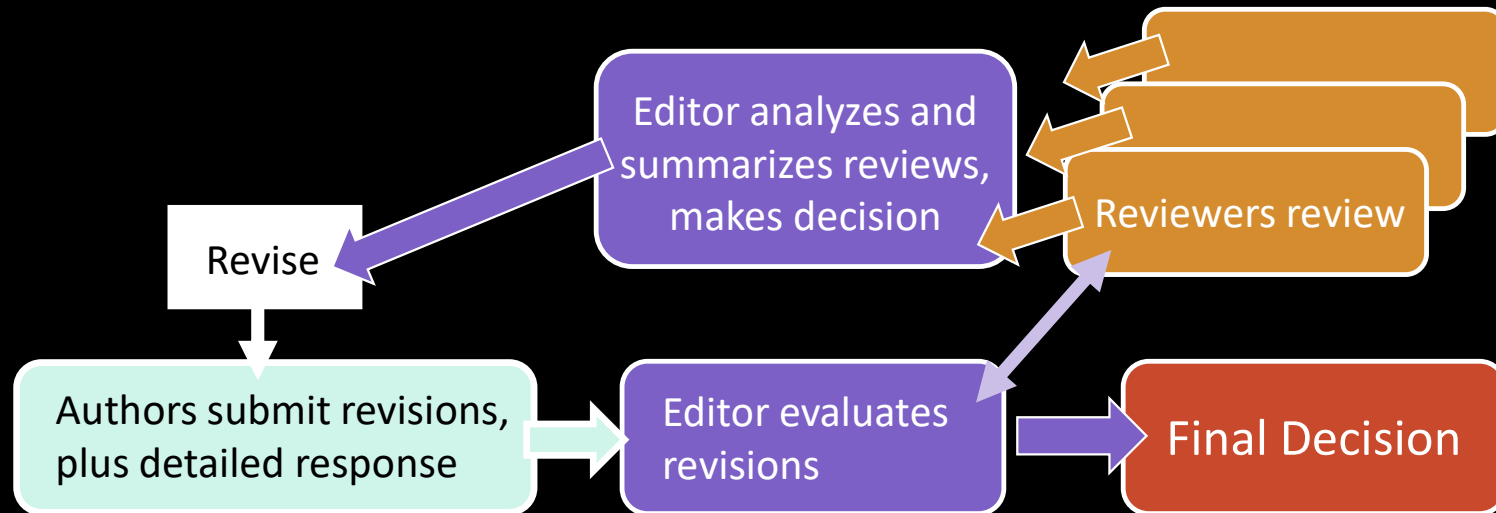


## The review – revise loop: Aim for a single circuit!

Here's where all of your hard work upfront pays off!

***Attention to detail*** and ***clarity in writing*** are the keys to efficient and successful review outcomes

Try to remain patient – these loops can take a while and depend on the volunteer labor of your peers!



## Why / how might your paper be rejected?

*It's not personal*

Highly selective  
journal with  
small  
acceptance rate

Content not  
appropriate in  
scope / topic

Too many  
technical or  
grammatical  
problems; too  
difficult to  
review

Reviewer  
suggestions  
were ignored  
/ dismissed

*Science = 6.1%*  
*Nature = 8 %*

**Step 3**: Respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to reviewers.

**\*\*Appreciate the reviewer\*\***

*Do not be dismissive of criticism*

- ❖ Reviews are a preview of how other readers may receive your paper. Consider them carefully, and with a positive mindset.
- ❖ If the reviewer did not get your point, consider the possibility that you may not have explained it well ^
- ❖ If you disagree with a comment, refute it in your response to the editor, in a collegial way, providing strong justification for your viewpoint.

*^sidenote: avoid explaining to the editor how the reviewer mis-understood. Consider re-stating to improve clarity and then explain to the editor the clarification that you made to the manuscript.*

### Step 3: Respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to reviewers.

*When you submit a revised version of your manuscript, you will also have to provide a “response to reviewer” document of some sort.*

#### Tip #1: The tone you take is important – don’t be snarky!

Reviewer comment: “This sentence is confusing. I don’t know why the authors’ didn’t just state how they got the uncertainties and refer to Table 1 with the numerical estimates”

Perhaps not the most gracious way to put it. How would you respond?

A possible response:

We agree that this sentence could be clarified. It now reads: “Uncertainties associated with depositional age are difficult to quantify, but we provide estimates based on the age ranges of the fossil assemblages present (see Table 1 for estimates)”.



### Step 3: Respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to reviewers.

*When you submit a revised version of your manuscript, you will also have to provide a “response to reviewer” document of some sort.*

Tip #1: The tone you take is important – don’t be snarky!

Tip #2: Take an organized approach your reviewer response

- Make a list of reviewers’ points. Sometimes this list is directly taken from the review itself.
- As you move through the list, write down and explain the changes that you’ve made to the manuscript in response to the reviewer comment. Build your “response to reviewers” as you go.
- ALWAYS use “track changes” when revising your manuscript.
- Respond to all reviewer concerns / comments, as well as those by the Associate Editor or Editor. If you do not make a suggested change, specify why that change is not necessary.

**Step 4:** Review! It's your responsibility.

Writing and reviewing are interlinked!

*As a writer you must consider your reviewers (and other readers) Thinking like a reviewer makes you a better writer.*



*And once an author, you will yourself become a reviewer of others' work*

\*Remember that every paper you submit will be reviewed by 3-4 people. Plan to pay that forward.

## Reviewing is a great opportunity!

1) You will learn a lot about writing and about the publication process through reviewing.

➡ If the writer makes some point well, or you notice a good structural or narrative technique, make note of that and add it to your arsenal.

➡ If the paper is dreadful, try and understand why it fails, so you can avoid those pitfalls yourself.

2) You will remain aware of the science that others in your field are doing!

## You've received an email asking you to review a manuscript. What should you do?

FIRST, make a decision to accept or decline.

- do you have any conflicts of interest?
- do you feel qualified to review?
- can you meet the deadline?



*Communicate with editors if you're unsure or know you will need a little extra time!*

### What NOT to do:

- Ignore the email!
- Wait a long time to agree / decline the review (aim to respond within 48 hrs)
- Agree to review and then ghost the editor! 🤖 🙄 ❌

## You've received an email asking you to review a manuscript. What should you do?

SECOND, (assuming you've agreed to review):

Skim the paper. You will likely know after a first pass if you will recommend rejection or revision. As you skim the paper, ask yourself the following questions and jot down notes:

- What is the main question addressed by the research? Is it relevant and interesting?
- How original is the topic? What does it add to the subject area compared with other published material?
- Is the paper well written? Is the text clear and easy to read?
- Are the conclusions consistent with the evidence and arguments presented? Do they address the main question posed?***
- If the author is disagreeing significantly with the current academic consensus, do they have a substantial case? If not, what would be required to make their case credible?
- How do tables and figures add to the paper? Do they aid understanding or are they superfluous?

## ***As you read the paper, did you spot any major flaws in the science?***

Typically, after a skim read, you should go back to certain sections of the paper for closer examination. Maybe you return to the tables and figures first to determine if there are any critical issues such as:

- 1) Insufficient data
- 2) Unclear data presentation
- 3) Contradictory data that either are not self-consistent or disagree with the conclusions
- 4) Confirmatory data that adds little, if anything, to current understanding - unless strong arguments for such repetition are made

**You're ready to start drafting your review!**

Most reviews start with a short paragraph summarizing the goals, approaches, and principle findings of the paper.

### WHY?

- 1) Helps editor put research in context – is it appropriate for this journal?
- 2) Signals to the author what key messages are conveyed to the reader. Are those what the authors intended?

Be positive – focus on successful aspects of the paper here!

Follow this with a conceptual overview of the research, offering your expert opinion about:

- whether or not the paper's premise is interesting and important
- the study strategy and methods are appropriate
- the conclusions are supported by the data

After the high-level introductory statements, do your best to outline the contributions and shortcomings of the paper. Use line numbers when making detailed comments about the manuscript.

Use the “golden rule” when reviewing and appreciate the work of the writer.

***Provide constructive criticism when possible.***

Just critical: “this confused me - it’s not clear why the statement is included here”

Constructive: “it might help the reader if this concept is introduced earlier in the manuscript. As written, this statement muddies the discussion”

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- If you disagree with the writer’s points, refute them in a collegial way, providing solid justification.
- If you see or suspect ethical or other serious issues, address them in confidential comments to the editor.
- Your main task is to evaluate the science, but if you see a way to help the writer express their thoughts more clearly, provide that feedback.



## Take note: the publishing world is changing

A look at how science publishing became a juggernaut industry

POLITICS / MAY 31, 2023

May 27, 2021 Marc Abrahams

### How Scientific Publishers' Extreme Fees Put Profit Over Progress

*Last month, the editorial team of NeuroImage resigned over the "unethical fees" charged by the journal's publisher, Elsevier. Can scientists ditch the for-profit system?*

The long read

### Is the staggeringly profitable business of scientific publishing bad for science?

VOL. XXXVI, NO. 2, WINTER 2020

### Who profits \$\$\$ from our scientific publications?

by Mark\_Costello | Jun 14, 2019 | Useful Stuff | 16 comments

We should think carefully about where we publish. Not only should we ask ourselves if the journal is well-respected (who else publishes there and who is on the Editorial Board) and well-respected (who else publishes there and who is on the Editorial Board). Apparently, the big science publishers make larger profits than most industries, in the or should be investing our pension money in such companies. They are subsidized by their free, referees who review papers for free, and most editors who work for free (occasional

### How Academic Science Gave Its Soul to the Publishing Industry

BY MARK W. NEFF

# University of California boycotts publishing giant Elsevier over journal costs and open access

The move could aid a global movement for immediate free access to scientific articles

28 FEB 2019 · BY [ALEX FOX](#), [JEFFREY BRAINARD](#)

[Home](#) / [News & Opinion](#)

## Opinion: Boycotting Elsevier Is Not Enough

The publishing giant will likely survive the latest boycott by scientists. An overhaul is needed to make science publishing fair and open.

**Shaun Khoo**

*Oct 22, 2019 / 4 min read*

We should think carefully about where we publish. Not only should we ask ourselves if the journal is appropriate (right audience) and well-respected (who else publishes there and who is on the Editorial Board), but who profits from our work. Apparently, the big science publishers make larger profits than most industries, in the order of 20-40% profit. Maybe we should be investing our pension money in such companies. They are subsidized by their authors who provide content for free, referees who review papers for free, and most editors who work for free (occasionally small "honoraria").

## A collection of helpful links:

GSA's Reference Guide:

[https://rock.geosociety.org/net/documents/gsa/pubs/GSA\\_RefGuide\\_Examples.pdf](https://rock.geosociety.org/net/documents/gsa/pubs/GSA_RefGuide_Examples.pdf)

GSA's Ethical Guidelines For Publication:

[https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/gsa/pubs/Ethical\\_Guidelines.aspx](https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/gsa/pubs/Ethical_Guidelines.aspx)

GSA's Data Policy:

<https://www.geosociety.org/gsa/pubs/dataPolicy.aspx>

ORCID, a persistent digital identifier for a researcher:

<https://orcid.org/>

“How to be a great peer reviewer” article:

[https://journals.lww.com/acgcr/fulltext/2022/12000/how\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_great\\_peer\\_reviewer.25.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/acgcr/fulltext/2022/12000/how_to_be_a_great_peer_reviewer.25.aspx)

“Step by step guide to reviewing a manuscript”:

<https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html>

***\*don't forget to study the author guides at your publication of choice!***