



Ensuring a quality review for a research article

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Annual National Scholarly Editors' Forum (NSEF)

22 November 2022



You're agreed to review a manuscript for a journal, now what?

Dive right in?

No. Formulate a plan in order to make a quality reviewer report that is of use to the Editor and the Authors.



Ask yourself an important question:

What is my role as a reviewer?

- Read the manuscript.
- Consider quality / novelty of the research.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Help inform the Associate Editor / Editor.



The review process is multi-stage.

First, read the entire manuscript.

HINT!

What to think about on the very first read?



- What is the story here?
- Am I enjoying reading this manuscript?
- How many times do I feel agitated?
- How many times do I ask a question of the manuscript that doesn't seem to be answered as I read more?

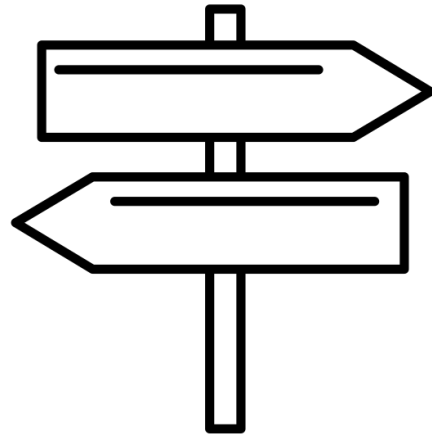


The review process is multi-stage.

First, read the entire manuscript.

Second, read it again but start with the results, then find their aim / objectives / research question(s). Read the abstract and conclusion again. Do they align?

Third, start your report file/where you plan to draft your review.

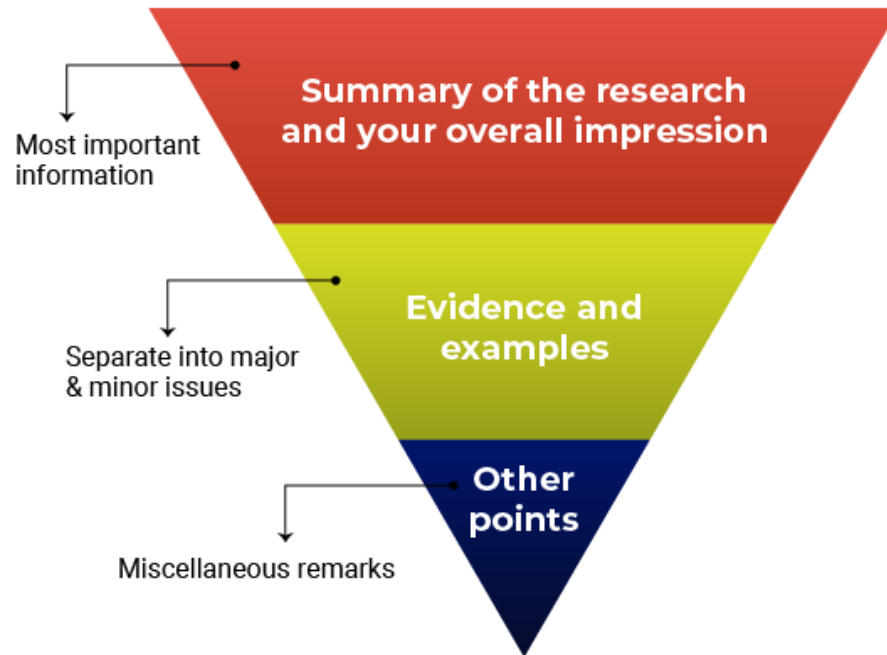


HINT!

By this stage, you already have a very good 'sense/feeling' about the manuscript.

This makes writing the review much easier.

[unless your feeling is negative!]



The structure of your report can either be free or according to journal requirements.

In general, this is a good model to follow:



*** If the journal requires comments online, always put them into a word document first in case you lose all your writing when the power goes out.

The format of a peer review report

Title and authors:

Summary: A short summary of the study findings with a comment on whether the findings are sound and novel or interesting.

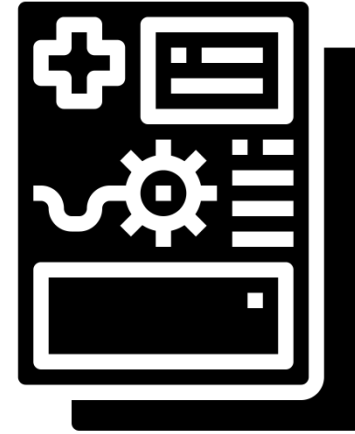
Major essential revisions: These are issues that you feel are so important that the authors *must* address because they affect the validity or interpretation of the study.

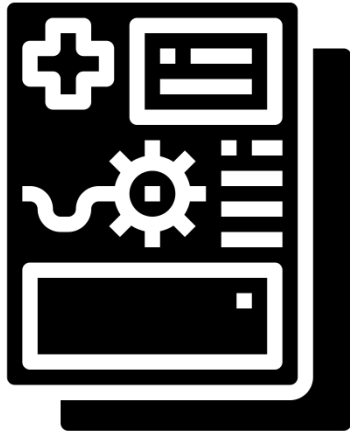
Minor essential revisions : These are issues that are so important that the authors must address because they are good practice, are field specific requirements or part of internationally accepted convention for reporting scientific research.

Discretionary revisions: These are revisions that would improve the manuscript, but you don't think are essential to the validity or interpretation of the study.

Confidential comments: This section is where you can raise concerns about the ethics of the study or share any information with the editor that you do not wish the authors to see.

Recommendations : This is a very important section where you tell the editor whether you think the manuscript should be rejected, accepted without further revision (rare) or could be published after revision.





Title of manuscript

Reviewer's comments

Date

General

Specific

Give page number and line number with a specific comment

Can give positive feedback here too

Can also give broad comments e.g., General comment on discussion – please ensure that requests made for more information on questions and results in the results section feed through into the discussion.

[FYI - General length of a review: ???]

HINT!

Do's and Don't for a reviewer:



- Don't use expletives, offensive language.
- Don't be self-promoting of own references.
- Don't attack the authors.
- Do give concrete steps for how to improve the manuscript.
- Don't disclose identity in your report.
- Don't be a copy-editor.
- Do imagine you are receiving this review for one of your manuscripts.



7 Common types of peer review

1

Single Blind Peer Review

Authors don't know who the reviewers are. But the reviewers are aware of the authors' identity when they decide to accept or reject the document for review as well as throughout the review process.



2

Double Blind Peer Review

The journal editor does not reveal the reviewers' credentials to the authors and vice-versa. So both parties are not aware of each other's identity. All indicators of identity such as names, affiliations, etc. are removed.



3

Open Peer Review

The authors and peer reviewers both know each other's identities. This system allows the peer reviewers' comments as well as the authors' responses to be published along with the final manuscript.



4

Collaborative Peer Review

This type of peer review occurs on a platform provided by the journal where authors & reviewers can discuss how the paper can be improved. Often, reviewers' identities are concealed from authors but may be revealed at the time of publication.



5

Third-Party Peer Review

Authors get their manuscripts reviewed by an independent peer review service before they approach any journal. Based on the reviews, they make changes to the paper and then submit it to the journal.



6

Post-Publication Peer Review

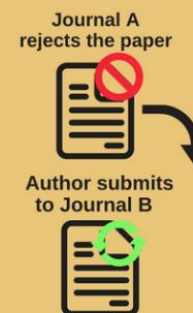
The journal provides a platform such as a discussion forum for the post-publication commenting. Once the published paper is available on the platform, anyone who reads it can post their comments or views about the paper.



7

Cascading Peer Review

When a manuscript is rejected after review because it is of low priority for the journal at the moment or because it is not interesting for the journal's target readers, the journal may suggest that the author/s submit the manuscript to an alternate journal along with the reviews. Often, the new journal is part of the publisher's portfolio.



For more useful advice and tips on academic writing and publishing, visit www.editage.com/insights

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Resources for authors and journals



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Why do I review manuscripts for journals?

I use it to keep up with the literature in my fields of expertise.

It's an obligation for my performance review at the SAMRC to review journal manuscripts.

It helps support the scientific community.

I can help Editors and Associate Editors.