

The Editorial and Review Process

Bill Miller, MD, PhD, MPH
Editor-in-Chief, *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*
Professor, Department of Epidemiology
Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC
bill_miller@unc.edu

*parts of this presentation are adapted from a presentation by Morris Weinberger, PhD, UNC-Chapel Hill

1

Why do we talk about publications?



Jim Berry © 1992 by NEA, Inc. "He didn't publish, so he perished."

2

Publication expectations

You **MUST** understand the expectations in your situation:

Department and/or School

Future jobs/promotion

3

Expectations: common metrics

- Number of papers
- Number of papers in "high impact" journals
- Mean number of citations
- h-index
- m-index (m-quotient)
- i10-index

4

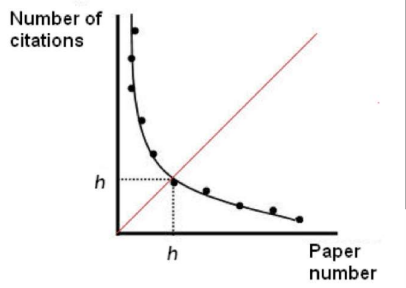
h-index

An individual measure of productivity and impact of a scientist/scholar

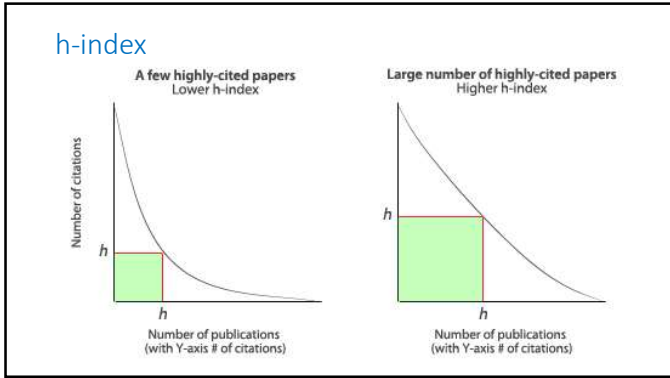
H-index \rightarrow h papers cited at least h times

5

h-index



6



7

m-index (m-quotient)

$m = \text{h-index} / \text{years since first publication}$

8

i10 index (Google scholar)

Number of publications with at least 10 citations

9

Types of publications

- Journal research articles
- Journal supplement research articles
- Systematic review articles
- Narrative review articles
- Methods papers
- "Thought pieces"
- Editorials/Commentaries
- Book chapters
- Books
- Abstracts

10

Value of publication types

- Types of research articles
 - RCT
 - Observational
 - Case series

Regular or supplement?

- Reviews
 - Narrative or systematic?

11

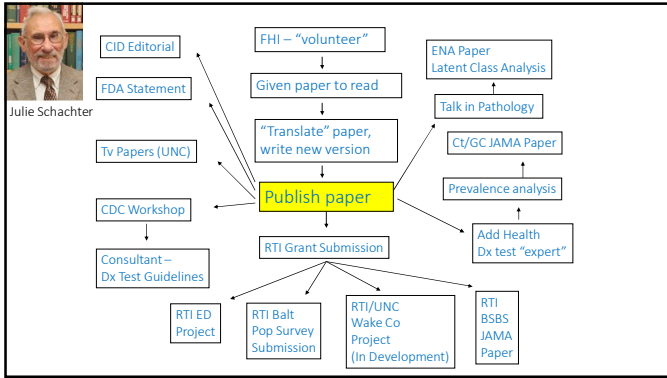
Value of publication types

Should I write that book chapter?

Usually, the answer is **NO!!!**

They just aren't worth the time & energy

12



16

Abstract to publication ratio

Too many abstracts = "unable to complete projects" or "spending too much time at conferences"

- Need to balance need for visibility (through conferences) with need for publication and visibility of FINAL product
- Avoid submitting abstract simply so you can attend a meeting
- Make your abstracts "count"

17

Impact factor: Choice of journals

Impact factors are one consideration

Measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period.

$$IF_{2023} = \frac{\text{citations}_{2023}}{(\text{publications}_{2022} + \text{publications}_{2021})}$$

$$5\text{-year } IF_{2023} = \frac{\text{citations}_{2023}}{(\text{publications}_{2022} + \text{publications}_{2021} + \text{publications}_{2020} + \text{publications}_{2019} + \text{publications}_{2018})}$$

18

Impact factor - 2022

Journal	Impact Factor
Lancet	168.9
BMJ	105.7
JAMA	120.7
NEJM	158.5
Int'l Journal of Epidemiology	7.7
Epidemiology	5.4
American J of Epidemiology	5.0
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	3.1

19

Article Influence Score & Eigenfactor Score

Article Influence Score: Average influence of a journal's articles over 5 years. A score >1.0 indicates an above average influence

$$AIS = (0.01 * \text{Eigenfactor Score}) / (\# \text{ papers over 5 yrs for journal} / \text{all papers over 5 yrs})$$

Eigenfactor Score: Number of times articles from a journal are cited over 5 years, taking into account which journals cited the articles (highly cited journals contribute more weight than less cited journals); self-citations are removed.

Normalized Eigenfactor: Rescaled Eigenfactor such that an average journal = 1. A score of 5 indicates a journal has 5 times the influence as an average journal.

20

Choosing a journal

- Match your paper to the journal
- Understand the journal's personality
- Use your mentors and colleagues
- And use this helpful resource:

<https://jane.biosemantics.org/>

21

Open access

Many excellent open access journals

- PLoS
- BMC

Beware of predatory open access journals

- Minimal review process
- Publish for profit, not for science
- Often use similar names to major journals (e.g. Epidemiology: Open Access)

25

Predatory open access journals

Year	Number of Predatory Publishers
2011	18
2012	23
2013	225
2014	477

<https://beallist.net/>

Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.

26

Common solicitations

From: [JIND](#)
 To: [Miller, William C](#)
 Subject: Follow Up: Editorial Board Invitation
 Date: Friday, June 13, 2014 6:40:31 AM

[Herald Scholarly Open Access – Journal of Infections and Non- Infections Diseases \(JIND\) – Open Access](#)

Dear Dr. William Miller,

Herald Scholarly Open Access publishes quality open access journals with the support of eminent scholars like you! Herald takes gratification in inviting you as an associate for our esteemed Editorial board for the Journal of Infectious and Non Infectious Diseases (JIND). We would be privileged to have you as our eminent editor on board, potentially serving your remarkable expertise for the advancement of the scientific community.

This is an international, nonprofit, open access, peer reviewed journal that is being recently launched by Herald Scholarly Open Access with a sole commitment to serve the scientific world at its best. Herald strictly stands by to the quality standards by reviewing the papers submitted for publication through a double blind peer review process. It follows Open Journal System for the efficient review process. It helps in promoting transparency and quick review within 21 days of submission of your manuscript.

27

Predators are quick!

Hi Dr. Gregory C Chang,
 May you enjoy a bountiful Thanksgiving Day!
 Thanksgiving is a day to give thanks for what we have, not to save a few to get more. "Be thankful for what we have". I would like to personally thank you for all the support from the commencement of the day to till now and I feel really proud to work with distinguished Researchers like you.
 If you are really thankful, what you do is "Sharing".
 On this occasion we are ready to share your valuable ideas, suggestions and contributions for my Journal that can put an edge over others. I feel pleasurable, if you can submit any kind of article for this coming issue only.
 Once again I honestly thank you for being with us in all the success. Anticipate receiving from you soon.
 Please sign up for the latest MedCrawe articles and follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

Article published 21 Nov 2022
Email received 25 Nov 2022

Shaha Connolly
 EDITORIAL & REVIEW ANALYST
 Phone: +36 180 38002
 MedCrawe Group
 # your excellence in publishing
 USA | EUROPE | ASIA

28

Predators are quick! Predatory conferences!

2nd Global Virtual Conference on Nursing and Patient Safety
April 14-15, 2023 | Online Conference

Dear Dr. Gregory C. Chang,
 Greetings from Nursing World 2023!!

The Organizing Committee of Nursing World Conference 2023 would like to invite you as a **Speaker** with your Colleagues to participate and deliver an oral poster presentation at the **2nd Global Virtual Conference on Nursing and Patient Safety** to be held during **April 14-15, 2023** as a Virtual conference with the **Theme: Exploring the advanced practices in nursing & Patient Safety.**

For more information, you can visit: <https://nursing-researchmeetings.com/>
 Your participation and support will help the conference to be a great knowledge enriching experience for all the participants who will be joining the conference from across the globe.

To book your speaker presentation slot, please submit your abstract for the presentation online: <https://nursing-researchmeetings.com/abstract/>
 We sincerely hope that you will honor us by accepting our invitation to join us for the conference.
 It would be our pleasure to have an eminent person like you as a Speaker for our prestigious conference.
 For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.
 Waiting for your kind response.

Thanks & Regards,
 Sandra Brown
 Program Manager
 Nursing World 2023
 Wenlock Road, London, England, N1 7GU, UK
 Phone: +44 7480723519
 Email ID: saman@nursing-researchmeetings.com

Article published 21 Nov 2022
Email received 28 Nov 2022

29

16 warning signs of fake journals

- Website:** The journal's website contains misleading or false information (eg, indexing, metrics, membership of scholarly publishing organisations), lacks an ISSN or uses one that has already been assigned to another publication, mimics another journal/publisher's site, or has no past or recent journal content.
- Name of journal:** The journal name is the same as or easily confused with that of another; scope, or association.
- Peer review process:** Peer review and peer review process and model are not mentioned, or manuscript acceptance or a very short peer review time is guaranteed. Submitted manuscripts receive inadequate or no peer review.
- Ownership and management:** Information about the ownership and/or management is missing, unclear, misleading, or false.

30

16 warning signs of fake journals

- 5. Governing body: Information on the editorial board is missing, misleading, false, or inappropriate for the journal; full names and affiliations of editorial board members are missing.
- 6. Editorial team/contact information: Full names and affiliations of the journal's editor/s and full contact information for the editorial office are missing, the editor-in-chief is also the owner/publisher, or the editor-in-chief is also the editor of many other journals, especially in unrelated fields.
- 7. Copyright and licensing: Policies and notices of copyright (and publishing licence and user licence) are missing or unclear.
- 8. Author fees: Mandatory fees for publication are not stated or not explained clearly on the journal website, submission system, or the letter of acknowledgement and/or are revealed only in the acceptance letter, as a condition of acceptance.

31

16 warning signs of fake journals

- 9. Process for identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct: There is no description on how cases of alleged misconduct are handled.
- 10. Publication ethics: There are no policies on publishing ethics (eg, authorship/contributorship, data sharing and reproducibility, intellectual property, ethical oversight, conflicts of interest, corrections/retractions).
- 11. Publishing schedule: The periodicity of publication is not indicated and/or the publishing schedule appears erratic from the available journal content.
- 12. Access: The way(s) in which content is available to readers, and any associated costs, is not stated, and in some cases listed articles are not available at all.

32

16 warning signs of fake journals

- 13. Archiving: There is no electronic backup and preservation of access to journal content (despite such claims).
- 14. Revenue sources: Business models, business partnerships/agreements, or revenue sources are not stated; publishing fees or waiver status are linked to editorial decision making.
- 15. Advertising: Advertising policy is not given, or advertisements are linked to editorial decision making or are integrated with published content.
- 16. Direct marketing: Direct marketing is obtrusive and gives misleading or false information.

https://publicationethics.org/files/cope_dd_a4_pred_publishing_nov19_screenaw.pdf

33

Avoiding predatory journals

Identify trustworthy journals through the Think.Check.Submit. campaign.

<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

34

Common barriers to submission

Fear of rejection Don't let *perfectionism* interfere!

Lack of confidence in writing skills

Lack time The *perfect* is the enemy of the *good*!
-Voltaire

Need for perfection Your *goal*?
Good enough!

35

Maximizing publication success

Clearly define your *research question*
Tell a clear and compelling *story*
Determine *authorship* early
Choose your *audience* and *journal* carefully
Follow the *journal's* rules for manuscripts
Understand the *publication process*
Plan your *time*
Know yourself and your work habits
Plan on multiple *drafts*
Share your work *early* (and often)

36

Common components of submission

- Cover letter
- Author list, affiliations, contact information
- Key words
- Abstract
- Manuscript text
- Figures
- Financial disclosures
- Copyright agreement

37

Cover letter

- Brief statement to the editor
- Highlight importance of your work in 1 or 2 sentences, not more
- Identify 3-4 competent reviewers
- Generally, do not identify persons you want to exclude from possible reviewers
- Include any specific language the journal requires

38

Key words

- Can be used to guide search engines
- You want your work to be found easily when people are looking for papers in your area
- Choose your words carefully
- Include both broad (sensitive) and narrow (specific) terms

39

Abstract

Follow journals instructions for the abstract

- Structured versus not
- Word count

Remember the abstract is the most read part of any paper

40

Manuscript text

Double-spaced text is common

Follow formatting requirements, including references

Line numbers!!! *Line numbers make the reviewer's & editor's jobs easier—you want their jobs to be easy!!!*

41

Figures

Include complete figure legends – a description of the figure content

Avoid wasting space

- Limit bar graphs

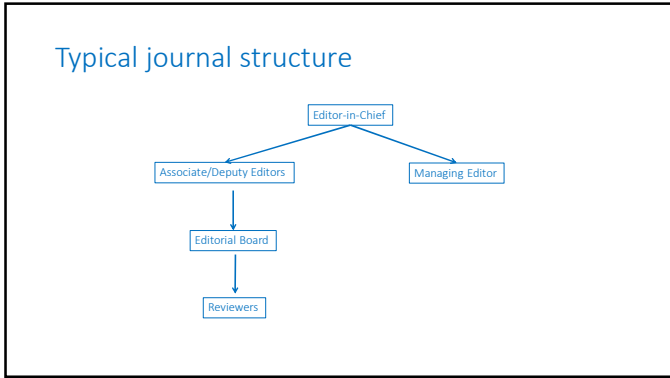
Avoid three dimensional figures (e.g. pie charts)

Make the figures pretty → Do not use Excel defaults

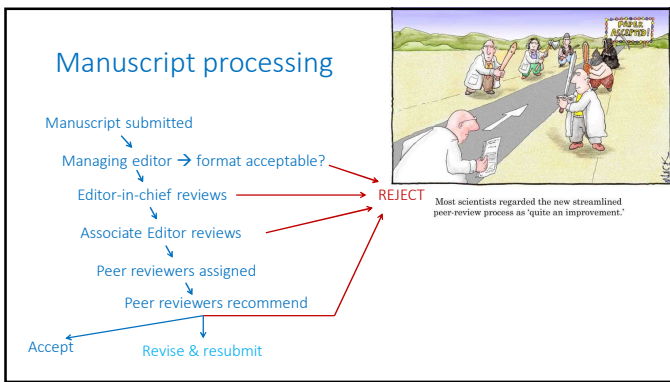
Consider color versus gray scale

- If using gray scale, ensure sufficient discrimination

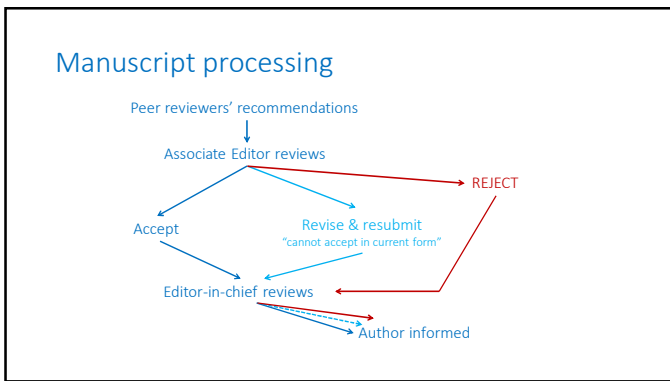
42



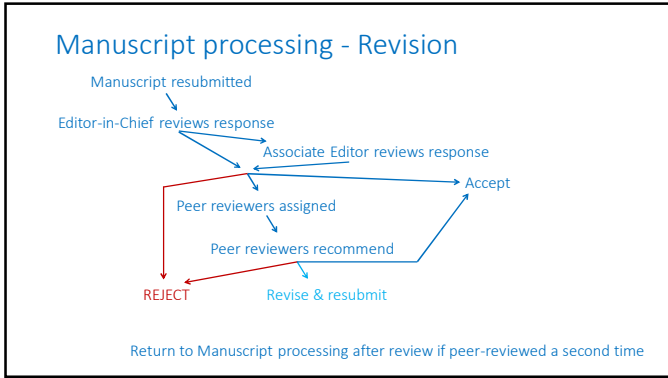
43



44



45



46

Revise and resubmit

Papers almost never accepted outright without revisions

Revise and resubmit is almost always a good thing

Reviews are intended to strengthen the science and enhance the manuscript quality

47

Reviews: What you don't see

Reviews have two parts: comments for the authors and comments for the editors

Comments to the editor can be frank assessment of the paper

- occasionally may not reflect what the reviewer wrote in the comments for author
- may encourage re-review
- may indicate need for additional review, such as a statistical review
- may comment on the writing, grammar, structure

48

How do editors choose reviewers?

- Journals maintain databases of reviewers
 - reviewers' areas of expertise are documented
 - some journals grade reviews
 - good reviewers are asked again
- Authors of papers previously published in the journal
- Reference lists from manuscript under consideration
- Pubmed searches on similar topics

49

Before you read that review...

- Put on your armor
- Be prepared for harsh and unkind words
- Try to separate your *self* from the science
- Remember the purpose of reviews: to improve the quality of the science and its communication

50

Responding to reviewers & editor

- Revise quickly
- Write for the editor and the reviewer
 - you do not know for sure whether it will go back out to the reviewers
- Be conciliatory in your tone. The reviewers are "right" to some extent, even when you disagree.
- Begin with a brief thank you to the reviewers.
 - You do not need to thank them for every comment.
 - Please don't say "We agree" for (nearly) every comment.

51

Responding to reviewers & editors

Do all of the easy/moderate changes, even when you disagree (unless it really weakens paper)

Do the hard changes that will really strengthen paper

Resist the hard changes that will take too long, be too difficult, or will not improve paper

- Make a clear argument why you don't want to make the change
- Often, additional language in discussion can be used instead of major additional analyses

52

Responding to reviewers & editors

One more time:

Tone and responsiveness are critical

A sure way to turn a "revise & resubmit" into reject is:

- 1) A tone that says, "I am smarter than you. How dare you criticize my work!"
- 2) Arguing or countering each point rather than making changes to the manuscript

The response is not a debate.
 It is a document detailing substantive changes.

53

Responding to reviewers & editors

After reading the initial decision (revise & resubmit vs reject), wait before reading the reviews.

Let your emotions settle down

Wait until you're cool, then read the reviews

Then give yourself another day, and only then develop your responses

Do not take reviews personally. Remember the goal is to advance the science and the reviews are intended to improve your paper, not be a critique of your abilities. It is not about you; it is about the science.

54

Structure of the response

- Enumerate each issue raised by the reviewers
 - copy word for word
 - In the same order as the reviews: reviewer 1, reviewer 2, reviewer 3
- Draft a response that highlights the changes made in the manuscript
 - word for word if short; only point to place in text if long change
- Shorten as necessary

55

Structure of the response - Intro

Authors Response
 We appreciate the opportunity to revise our manuscript for consideration of publication in *The Lancet*. We have responded to every comment, from the editors and reviewers. Our original manuscript was over the word limit, at 5672 words. We have substantially reduced the words in the current version to 4997 words. To shorten the manuscript and also provide substantive changes in response to the reviewers, we have added three appendices, which provide additional details of the methods (Appendix A), the intervention manual (Appendix B), and supplemental results (Appendix C). Point-by-point responses are given below in italics.

56

Structure of the response – Small changes

Reviewer 1 (stats):
 1) Was randomisation stratified by site or any other factor?
RESPONSE: Yes, randomization was stratified by site. This has been clarified:
 Line 101-102: "Index participants ("indexes") were randomly assigned to either the SOC or intervention arms at a ratio of 3:1 (SOC:intervention). Randomization was stratified by site, and used a permuted-block design."

2) By probability ratio, do the authors mean risk ratio, odds ratio or another formula? For example, in Stata, the log-linear binomial regression allows for odds ratio, risk ratio and risk difference so I am not sure what the probability ratio mean.
RESPONSE: To clarify, we use ART use as an example. probability ratio = P(Alive and on ART at x time | intervention)/P(Alive and on ART at time x | SOC). Given that this describes a state, e.g. the proportion of persons who were using ART at a given point of time, the probability ratio is analogous to a prevalence ratio at the given point of time. The probability ratio is not a risk ratio (cumulative incidence ratio) because persons may have started ART and stopped by the time point used for the assessment. This has been clarified:
 Line 222: "Probability ratios (PR), analogous to prevalence ratios at a specific time point, were used to compare"

57

Structure of the response – Paragraph change

33)3rd sentence: the way the sentence is written, it sounds like partners who were not HIV-infected were enrolled, but there were other reasons, listed in fig 1, that partners were not enrolled.
 RESPONSE: We agree that it was confusing as written. We have revised the paragraph by making the references to the indexes sequential, which then makes the partner enrollment sequential. We have also made the partner section its own paragraph

58

Structure of the response - decline

3) Scalable: The authors describe the intervention as scalable. Many sites around the world are working to scale-up up ART use and improve retention. <text deleted for brevity of demonstration> This was a preparatory trial and there may not be sufficient data, but it would be helpful to know if specific navigation or counseling activities were associated with ART use and viral suppression and mortality and why the results were not as good in Indonesia. The authors report that participants in Ukraine and Vietnam used more psychosocial services than participants in Indonesia and Indonesians lived further from treatment centers (no distance from site data was presented in the results). This question probably deserves more investigation and discussion.
 RESPONSE: We agree that trying to identify the specific aspects of this intervention that appeared to be most important would be informative. However, the intervention was designed as a package, addressing barriers to ART and MAT uptake at both the system and individual levels. We did not pre-specify any analyses attempting to dissect the effect. We are currently in the planning phase for these analyses, and we intend to write a separate paper or papers that delves into this issue in some depth. Those analyses will take some time to do well, as we will examine the number and types of counseling sessions and navigator activities. At this time, we do not wish to speculate beyond the intervention package as a whole.

59

Structure of the response – previous change

11) The authors describe the intervention as flexible, integrated, and scalable. One example of flexibility is that different staff (i.e., clinicians, counselors, master-level staff) performed navigation/counseling activities at different sites and counseling sessions were meant to adjust based on client needs. If there are other examples of adjustments to participant navigation or the integration of the activities in routine practice that could be presented in the methods or results, that would be interesting.
 RESPONSE: Please see response to Reviewer 2's point #2 above.

33) 3rd sentence: the way the sentence is written, it sounds like partners who were not HIV-infected were enrolled, but there were other reasons, listed in fig 1, that partners were not enrolled.
 RESPONSE: We agree that it was confusing as written. We have revised the paragraph by making the references to the indexes sequential, which then makes the partner enrollment sequential. We have also made the partner section its own paragraph

60

Structure of the response - Alternative

9) Reviewers are asked to 'comment on the extent to which you believe this submission can change practice or thinking'. The intervention (case management and counseling), as described in the methods, does not differ substantially from activities being implemented at HIV treatment sites around the world by governments and NGOs. The rigorous assessment of the outcomes; however, is a model of how programmatic data can be used to monitor and adjust activities aiming to increase the proportion of PLHIV on ART and virally suppressed.

RESPONSE: Thank you for this insightful and well-worded suggestions to our research in context section. We have added text to this section on lines 39-41 and 52-55.

61

My preference is against...

Reviewers are asked to 'comment on the extent to which you believe this submission can change practice or thinking'. The intervention (case management and counseling), as described in the methods, does not differ substantially from activities being implemented at HIV treatment sites around the world by governments and NGOs. The rigorous assessment of the outcomes; however, is a model of how programmatic data can be used to monitor and adjust activities aiming to increase the proportion of PLHIV on ART and virally suppressed.

RESPONSE: Thank you for this insightful and well-worded suggestions to our research in context section. We have added text to this section on lines 39-41 and 52-55.

Some editors may really like this approach. I know many senior authors swear by it. I find it harder to follow

62

Challenging rejections

You can occasionally challenge a rejection

- can occur at any stage (e.g. with or without review)
- can ask for a new "impartial" reviewer

You must have a compelling case: evidence that reviewer did not seem qualified or was biased

Be concise in your written request. The editor has many papers to deal with; you just have the one.

Respect the editor's final decision.

63

After acceptance

Your paper may or may not be edited by a professional editor

- depends on the journal and their budget
- you have some, but not complete, control over changes made

You will receive galley proofs with these changes and with the article formatted for publication

- review the proofs very carefully
- make sure any editing has not changed the intended meaning
- answer any author queries completely

64

Purpose of journal peer review

Improve the quality of individual manuscripts

Improve the quality of published science

Improve journal quality

Educate and help authors

Advance knowledge

65

Your role as a reviewer

Part of your responsibility to the profession

- Reasonable rule of thumb: one submission to a journal merits a minimum of two reviews for that journal

Time-consuming, relatively thankless task

Early career investigators often provide better reviews than more established folks

66

Peer review

Peer review is based on a centuries' old Western system
It is a system built by people of privilege, largely for other people of privilege
Sexism, racism, nationalism, epistemicide* enter the process too often

- Poor reviews: *epistemicide: the killing, silencing, annihilation, or devaluing of a knowledge system
- silence new ideas
 - leads to important work being shelved
 - silence brilliant people
 - delays authors' advancement

Ideally, peer review = reflexive mentorship

de Souza, R. Peer reviewing, epistemic violence, and "reflexive mentorship".
https://www.ncfdd.org/februarynews24?utm_source=NCFDD&utm_medium=emailnurture&utm_campaign=news&utm_keyword=general&utm_content=2024february

67

Peer review = reflexive mentorship

Recognize the importance of academic generosity, collegiality & collaboration

Tend carefully to precarious voices

Act as allies for community of scholars—encourage new ideas, hone existing ideas, strive for excellence

“Every review is a crucial historical event that offers a renewed opportunity to disrupt and democratize the existing canon.”

Put simply: Be kind & constructive

de Souza, R. Peer reviewing, epistemic violence, and "reflexive mentorship".
https://www.ncfdd.org/februarynews24?utm_source=NCFDD&utm_medium=emailnurture&utm_campaign=news&utm_keyword=general&utm_content=2024february

68

Qualities of a good reviewer

Review only papers you are qualified to review

- You can correspond with editor about your comfort level. She may still want your input

Inform editor about conflicts of interest. Ask editor if you are unsure.

Respond promptly to every query for review

- Better to say “no” right away, so the editor can find another reviewer

Do not:

- 1) fail to indicate whether you will or will not review (a big waste of time!);
- 2) fail to complete review after agreeing to do it.**

Provide a thoughtful & considerate review.

**** ARGH!!!**

69

Steps for a good review

- Read the paper once soon after you receive it
- Jot a few notes
- Let it ruminate; check out any questions it may have raised
- Read again in 1-2 days. Jot down the key points
- Give it another day and a final read, and write the review OR
- Finish the review right after the second read

70

Qualities of a good review (1)

- Objective assessment of the paper
- Thorough, focus on the science
- Consider the big picture; what does this paper add to our knowledge?
- Does the paper confirm what we already know? Is that confirmation important?
- Does the paper have a fatal flaw?
- Have the authors conveyed that information clearly?
- Limit your comments to the areas that you know about. Don't provide comments outside your expertise
 - if you don't feel qualified, let the editor know early. Comment only on what you can.

71

Qualities of a good review (2)

- Begin with positive (kind) statements**
- Number comments; indicate page number & paragraph
- Small explicit statements with clear explanations
- Provide solutions to the problems raised, rather than just pointing them out
- Group major comments and minor comments
- Organize by most important first or by section—either can be effective

****BUT...**
 Don't say it is well written when it is not
 Or that it is important when it is not
 Or that it is interesting when it is not

Be kind and constructive.
Phrase the comments like you would like to receive them.

72

Thoughtful review should touch on

- Importance of the study question
- Rigor of the scientific method
- Appropriateness of the approach/methods
- Contribution to the scientific literature
- Appropriateness of interpretation & conclusions
- Success of the manuscript in communicating to the reader

73

Editor's & journal's criteria

- Appropriateness of content for journal readership
- Originality and content
- Appropriateness of study design & methods
- Validity of conclusions
- Quality of writing

74

Editor's considerations for revise & resubmit

- What needs to be done to make this publishable?
- Is the paper too long?
- Should the paper be a brief communication or research note?

75

Editor's considerations with accept

Worthy of commentary or editorial?

- supportive or counterpoint by one of the reviewers?

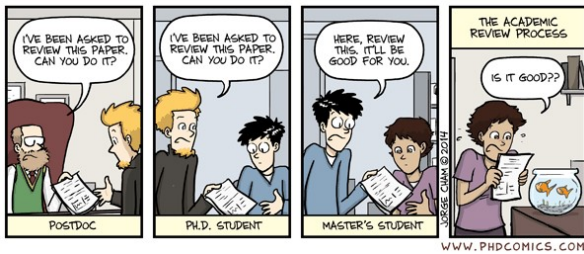
Press release? Tweet?

Good reasons to publish in a specialty journal!

Placement in the journal?

76

Becoming a reviewer



77

Becoming a reviewer

Let editor know you are interested in reviewing


- more likely to work with specialty journals
- provide description of your expertise

78

Write what you know!

Thank you!!!

Bill Miller
bill_miller@unc.edu



*leop
allan*

"Write what you know. Write about male-pattern baldness."

79

Rejection: An all-too-familiar experience



© 2007 by Charles M. Schulz. All rights reserved. Peanuts® is a registered trademark of Charles M. Schulz. Peanuts® is a registered trademark of Charles M. Schulz. Peanuts® is a registered trademark of Charles M. Schulz.

80
