“Review for others as you would have others review for you”
- McPeek et al., 2009

INTRODUCTION

This worksheet has been compiled from the advice of a number of journals and publications. The aim of the worksheet is to give less-experienced peer reviewers a concrete workflow of questions and tasks to follow when they first peer-review. Please note that this is a suggested framework for reviewers to follow. Depending on the journal or subject-field, some elements may be lacking. Users should adapt the worksheet to suit their needs, their personal review style, and the journal’s guidelines.

EVERY PEER-REVIEW PROCESS SHOULD AIM TO (HAMES, 2008):

- Prevent the publication of bad work – filter out studies that have been poorly conceived, designed or executed
- Check that the research reported has been carried out well and there are no flaws in the design or methodology
- Ensure that the work is reported correctly and unambiguously, with acknowledgement to the existing body of work
- Ensure that the results presented have been interpreted correctly and all possible interpretations considered
- Ensure that the results are not too preliminary or too speculative, but at the same time do not block innovative new research and theories
- Select work that will be of the greatest interest to the readership
- Provide editors with evidence to make judgments as to whether articles meet the selection criteria for their particular publications
- Generally improve the quality and readability of a publication (although this is more a by-product of peer review)
BEFORE YOU READ

Check if the journal has review-guidelines and adjust the following work plan where appropriate.

READ 1st TIME: Gaining an overview

1. Is the article in line with the journal’s scope?
   - Yes?
   - No?
   
   Continue
   
   Doubtful since the Editor has accepted it for review. However, contact the Editor for clarification before proceeding.

2. Does your expertise cover all aspects of the article? If not, describe which sections you can respond to and why?

3. “Mirror” the article. Make a first draft describing the main aim of the article and why it’s innovative.

4. Is the article publishable in principle?
   - Yes?
   - No?

   Yes?
   
   No?

   Continue to 2nd reading
   
   Describe the fatal flaws and submit your review.
For the rest of the review, try and separate your points into "Major" or "Minor" issues and/or suggestions. Using bullet points can help the author(s) keep track when responding to your review.

### 5. Do the Introduction and Abstract clearly identify the need and relevance for this research?

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<th>Major issues:</th>
<th>Minor issues:</th>
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### 6. Does the Methodology target the main question(s) appropriately?

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### 7. Are the Results clearly and logically presented, and are they justified by the data presented? Are the figures clear and fully described?

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### 8. Do the Conclusions justifiably respond to main questions the author(s) posed? Do the Conclusions go too far or not far enough based on the results?

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READ 3rd TIME:  The writing and formulation

9 Is the manuscript’s story cohesive and tightly reasoned throughout? If not, where does it deviate from the central argument?

Major issues:  Minor issues:

10 How are the grammar and spelling in the manuscript?

Major issues:  Minor issues:

FINISHED?

11 Round off your review with a comment about whether you like to peer-review a re-submitted version of the paper, or if you look forward to reviewing the next round of edits.

12 Compile your responses to the points above into a single document. Here is a suggested order for your review:

A. Introduction: Mirror the article, your expertise and whether the paper is publishable or if there are fatal flaws;
B. Major issues:
C. Minor issues;
D. Other itsy-bitsy suggestions.

BEFORE SUBMITTING: READ YOUR OWN REVIEW!

13 Remember the quote on the first page! “Review for others as you would have others review for you”. Make sure that your review is constructive and not offensive. Please change text that could be considered rude before you submit!
References and some other interesting and useful articles/resources about peer review


Nature Masterclass: Focus on Peer Review (free). https://masterclasses.nature.com/courses/205

Design by Suet Chan