

How to be a journal referee

(Panel Discussion)

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Former Relevant Roles :
Chair, Science Council (6 years)
Chair, Journal Business Management Committee
Member, Editor Search Committee (1998 and 2012)
Member, Publisher Assessment Team (1995)
Associate Editor (12 years)
Deputy Editor (6 years)
8+ years as NIH Study Section member

Currently Associate Editor, *Radiology*

Why be a journal referee?

- Part of being an academic scientist
- Part of being a member of the field
- Let's you know where the field is headed
- Allows you to steer its direction

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Duties as a scientist to review?

- Peer review is the bedrock of U.S. Science
- If you expect to submit manuscripts for publication, you have a duty to review manuscripts. For every manuscript you submit, the minimum is to review 6 manuscripts.

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Nitty-Gritty of Review (1)

- **General Comments**
- **Specific Comments**
- **Minor Comments (usually grammatical)**

For most journals, you can either input your report as a text cut and paste or as a PDF – if you are going to cut and paste, text formatting does not matter as it is usually lost in the paste. If you have math to discuss or other content requiring special fonts – submit your review as a PDF.

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Nitty-Gritty of Review (2)

- **Specific Comments**

Number your comments

Refer to locations in the manuscript, usually like:

Page 5, line 34: This sentence

or

Line 459: The word “incidents” is used in the

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Nitty-Gritty of Review (3)

- **General Comments**
 - Should be written last
 - Need to summarize the scientific aspects of the manuscript (1-2 sentences) so that the authors know that you understood it.
 - Then comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript
 - Do not make an explicit recommendation of “reject” or “accept” in the body of the review

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Nitty-Gritty of Review (4)

Efficiency

- Recommend voice recognition software (DNS)
- Print out or tablet read
- First red – red pen document (specific comments)
- Second Read (if necessary) – brush up on the big picture for your overall assessment

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Final Comments

- The reviewer is not a collaborator on the team
- Do not redesign the experiments and suggest that they all be redone. This is the authors' science, not yours, and your job is to evaluate their science, and not make it your own.
- Recognize the work that addressing your comments require. If you are suggesting changes of some sort, put yourself in the shoes of the authors. The criteria for experimental methods is acceptability, not perfection
- Rather than requiring more months of experiments, reject the manuscript with good explanation

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