Some things to do and not to do

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The review

The main purpose of your review should not be to reject a manuscript but to make suggestions as to how to improve it.
What not to do

- Do not accept an assignment to referee a paper if you cannot do it in a timely fashion
  - typically, if you can’t do it within 2 - 3 weeks, then say no
  - if you can’t commit to a second-cycle review, then say no
  - it’s unfair to the author (and the Editor) if you hold up publication excessively
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} cycle review

- Don’t hold up publication by taking too long for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} review
  - \textit{just check that the author has made all the changes you recommended (or adequately explained why not)}
  - \textit{always do this within one week if possible}
After review, to reject or request revision?

- Reject the paper if you consider that no amount of revision will make the paper publishable.
- Request revision if you are confident that the paper will be publishable after all the revisions you suggested have been made and any questions you may have raised have been answered satisfactorily.
Can you recommend rejection before completing your review?

- Yes
  - If you have already reviewed the paper for another journal, recommended rejection, and your suggested changes have not been made (you don’t need to tell this to the author, tell the Editor and the Editor will do it)
  - If it is so poorly written that it is unintelligible
  - If it is obvious that much of the paper has been plagiarized
Plagiarism

- Plagiarism* is the use of text or other items (figures, images, tables) without permission or acknowledgment of the source of these materials

Common forms of plagiarism

- Reproducing, word-for-word, sentences of others, and often complete paragraphs
- Reproducing figures and illustrations without indicating the source
- Problem: with electronic publications it’s too easy to copy-and-paste
Don't be cruel!

- The author has put lots of work and time into this so don't say things in your review like “this is utter nonsense" or “of no earthly value“, etc.
  - *by all means say this to the Editor in confidence but not to the author*

- In comments to the author, be constructive, not cruel
Examples of what to look out for

- Theory Section
- Discussion Section
- References
Has the theory already been published elsewhere?

- Many authors reproduce their theory section in several papers
- In your review, tell the author to simply state the basic theory and give a reference to a previous paper where the theory is presented
- Most readers will already have read the theory elsewhere anyway, so why waste the reader’s time and energy (and journal space) reproducing it here
What to look for in the Discussion section

- Has the author attempted to explain or justify unexpected results?
- Is there excessive redundancy with the Results section?
- Are all the claims made in the Discussion warranted by the results?
What to look for in the References

- Has the author given appropriate recognition of the work of others?
- Has the author adhered to the reference style of the journal?
  - *if not, then it’s likely that the paper was originally sent to another journal first and was rejected*
  - *tell the author in your review that the reference style is wrong and tell the Editor*
Finally: respect confidentiality

Why should you keep this paper and this review confidential?

• *If you share this paper with others they may be tempted to “steal” parts of it*
• *If you share your review with others, especially if it is highly critical, you might embarrass the author*
In Summary

- Be timely with your 1st and 2nd reviews
- Be constructive, not cruel
- Watch out for things like plagiarism, repetitive publications, incomplete discussion of results, missing references
- Respect confidentiality
- Finally, remember that the main purpose of the review is not to reject the paper but to improve it