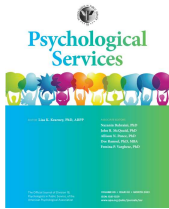


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# How to Review a Journal Manuscript

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## Overview

- Benefits of reviewing
- Becoming a reviewer
- Role of reviewers
- Reviewer responsibilities
- Peer review process
- Accepting or declining a review
- Writing a constructive review
- Components of a review
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion in peer review
- Timeliness

AND...

What are you hoping to get out of today's session?



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## Benefits of reviewing

- Improve your writing and research skills
- Stay up to speed on current research
- Gain insight into what Editors and peer reviewers look for in submissions
- Ensure the quality and integrity of research before it is published
- Build connections as part of the journal's community, including opportunities for editorial board membership
- Record and showcase your review history on the [Web of Science Reviewer Recognition platform](#) and [ORCID](#)
- Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in the research and publishing process, in turn promoting equitable and inclusive delivery of psychological services

Web of Science Reviewer  
Recognition Service

ORCID

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## Questions for You

- If you are currently reviewing, how did you get started in being a reviewer?
- What would you encourage individuals interested in reviewing do to start work as a reviewer?



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## Becoming a reviewer

- Seek opportunities to co-review or apply for reviewer mentorship programs
- Network with others who are on editorial boards and share your interest in reviewing for their journal
- Develop knowledge of recently published research
- Publish your own work



### How do I apply to be a reviewer?

Use the QR code to [complete the reviewer interest form](#) or [submit your CV via email](#) for the editorial board's consideration.

For *Psychological Services*: at the end of your CV, please share ways you commit to equity, diversity, and inclusion in your profession and/or as a peer reviewer.

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## Becoming a reviewer ctd.

- Experience evaluating research on public sector psychology in an equitable fashion (e.g., awareness of individual and group biases, impacts of historical and systemic limitations on full participation in psychological science, etc.)
- Update your areas of expertise in the journal's manuscript submission portal. This will help the editorial team match you with papers that best fit your interests and expertise!
- Register for an [ORCID](#) and link it to your profile in the manuscript submission portal
- Prepare to schedule enough time to review (1–4 hours per manuscript reviewed)



### How do I apply to be a reviewer?

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## Role of reviewers

- Help authors improve their manuscripts
- Contribute to determining an article's suitability for publication
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Uphold excellence and integrity of published research
- Provide feedback for Editor or Associate Editor to incorporate as part of decision letter
- Note: The final decision always rests with the Editor

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## Reviewer responsibilities

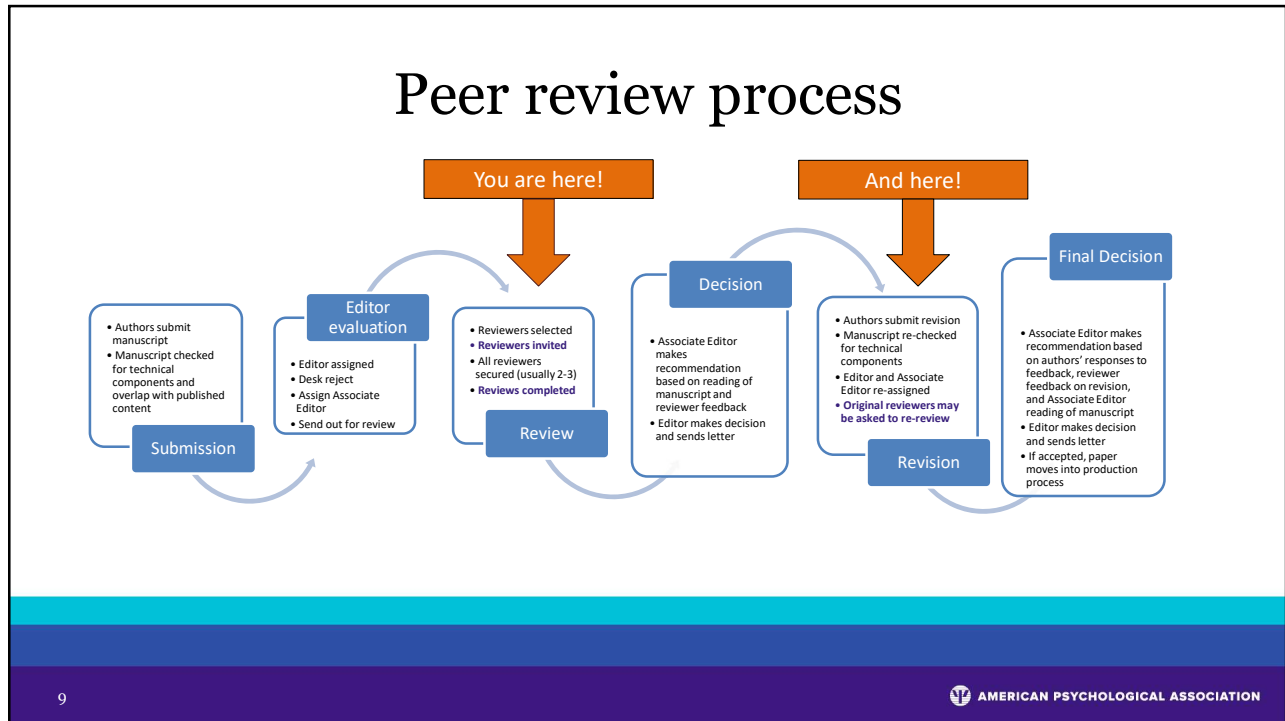
- **Confidentiality is key**
- Constructive feedback with respectful tone
- Provide actionable feedback
- Disclose conflicts of interest
- Report suspected ethical violations to Editor
- Be timely and be transparent about availability
- Sensitivity to equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Reduce unconscious bias
  - Focus on the research—not author names, institutions, gender identity, language, etc.
  - Communicate the reasons for your recommendation, and ensure they are grounded in ways the research can be strengthened
  - If in doubt, contact the Editor or decline the invitation

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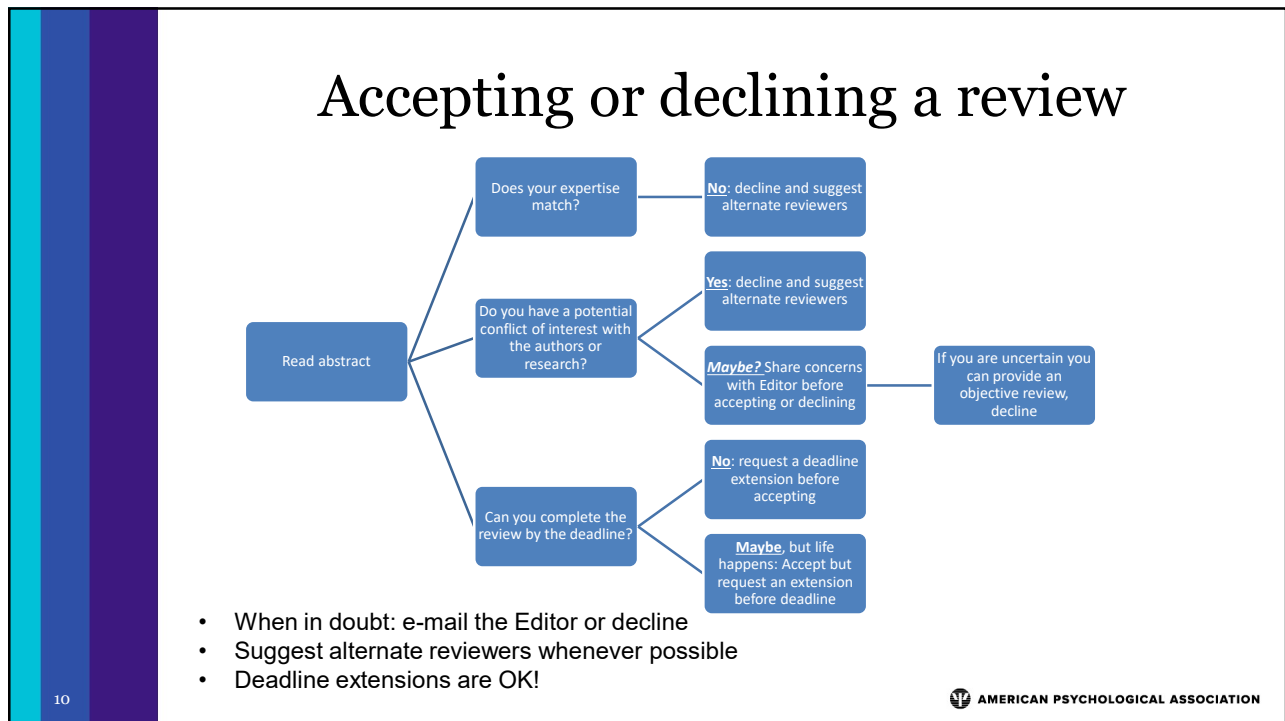
Aly, M., Colunga, E., Crockett, M. J., Goldrick, M., Gomez, P., Kung, F. Y. H., McKee, P. C., Pérez, M., Stilwell, S. M., & Diekman, A. B. (2023). Changing the culture of peer review for a more inclusive and equitable psychological science. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 152(12), 3546–3565. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001461>

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## Questions for You

- From a review you have received in the past, what made the review particularly helpful to you as an author?
- Has anyone here received an unhelpful review? If so, what elements made it so?



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## Helpful reviews

- Maintain a professional and respectful tone
- Focus on edits that improve clarity rather than assumptions about authors (e.g., first language)
- Phrase feedback in third person (e.g., the authors, they, the manuscript) rather than second person (“you”)
- Support recommendation with detailed, comprehensive analysis of quality, coherence, methods, results, and interpretations
- Separate major and minor points
- Number points to facilitate action Editor’s reference to review in decision letter
- Arrive by the deadline (or reviewers request extension in advance)



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## Not-so-helpful reviews

- Use second person (“you”) throughout, which may be viewed as accusatory
- Very short, with no detailed or concrete feedback
  - “This paper has potential but could use improvement. The end.”
  - “This is a great paper- nice work!”
- Offers criticism without any constructive feedback
  - “Your proofreading is terrible and your data is faulty.”
- Questions the authors’ qualifications instead of highlighting how to improve the research
  - “The authors do not understand the literature at all”
- Inflammatory in tone
  - “What a waste of time”
- Include personal attacks
  - “These authors always have useless findings”
- Focus on author attributes rather than the science
  - “These authors are too junior to publish on this topic”
  - “The writing is too emotional”

## Fixing tone

| Inappropriate                                   | Appropriate   |
|---|---|
| “You must . . .”                                | “The authors should. . .”   |
| “Great paper!”                                  | Very rarely does a manuscript need no improvement. Summarize the strengths, and provide concrete feedback on improving other areas (even if minimal). |
| “Your proofreading is terrible.”                | “The manuscript should undergo an additional proofread, as errors are present that reduce clarity of the arguments.”                                  |
| “The authors do not understand the literature.” | “I suggest the authors consider the following articles, which may better inform their findings. . .”  |
| “You are wrong.”                                | Do not include these statements.  |
| “The writing is too emotional.”                 | “The manuscript would benefit from more concise language to best support their arguments and conclusions.”  |

Speak your critique in diplomatic ways that will serve the authors to strengthen their work, so that their voices may be heard.

## Components of a review

- Review form
  - Rating scales on specific characteristics
  - Recommendation for final decision
- Author Narrative (transmitted to author)
  - 1-2 page summary of major strengths/weaknesses, as well as any important minor points to consider
  - Provision of all constructive and actionable feedback
  - Bulleted points are often most helpful to the author as they design a point by point response back to your commentary
  - **Do not place your recommendation about publication within the narrative back to the author**
- Comments to the Editor (confidential)
  - Frank assessment, including fundamental flaws + fit with journal
  - *Should be consistent* with the author narrative but often offers an opportunity for more direct communication of your concerns to assist the Editor
  - If you provide a recommendation for decision, please provide justification for your recommendation.

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## Overall assessment and key strengths

- **Overall assessment:** Start with a brief summary of your overall impression of the manuscript.
  - Is it a strong contribution to the field?
  - Does it have significant flaws?
- **Summary and Key Strengths:**
  - Briefly describe the key strengths of the manuscript.
  - Highlight points that make it interesting, informative, important, or novel.
  - Provide a brief summary of the study.
    - Provides a brief statement of your essential understanding of the study and its findings, thereby, authors are reassured that you have read the manuscript in detail.
    - Serves to remind you about the study when you receive copies of the editorial decision letter and other reviews.

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## Major points

- Identify the most important problems, challenges, errors, omissions, or limitations.
- Example issues:
  - Does it make a meaningful contribution? New research?
  - Literature review comprehensive?
  - Is the science strong? Research design appropriate? Statistics reported accurately? Methods explained appropriately? Were the right participants included? Sample size adequate?
  - Findings are important and of interest to the readership
  - Implications of findings appropriately discussed and interpreted
- Focus primarily on deficiencies in the science, not in the writing.
- Preferred format: numbered or bulleted list with no more than about 5–10 items.

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## Minor points

- List any other problems, challenges, errors, omissions, or limitations that should be addressed; violations of [APA Style](#); problems with grammar; quality of writing; etc.
- Preferred format: list with no more than about 10–20 items.
- Use the manuscript's section and subsection headings to structure your comments, and indicate the location(s) of the problems by page, paragraph, and/or line number.
- **Remember to focus on the content: manuscripts will undergo copyediting if accepted.**

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## Equity, diversity, and inclusion

- How well does the manuscript contribute to the psychological well-being of multiple or underrepresented communities?
- Is reinforcement of stereotypes or contributions of bias avoided in the methods?
- Could the writing be used or misused to cause harm, especially to vulnerable groups?
- Has the participant sample been appropriately described—did the authors justify their sample and describe their sample inclusion efforts?
- Are the references inclusive?
- Is biased language present?
  - Refer to APA's [Bias-Free Language Guidelines](#) and [Inclusive Language Guidelines](#) for support.

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## Timeliness

- Delays in the review process can hinder the dissemination of novel findings, innovations and critical insights, potentially stalling advancements in the field.
- Authors, particularly early-career, may depend on timely publications for academic advancement, grant applications, or further research endeavors.
- Sometimes unexpected life circumstances may contribute to delays. If you run into issues or anticipate a delay, please inform the editorial office in advance.

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## Summary

- The field needs exceptional reviewers, like YOU!
- Apply to become a reviewer and ask those already reviewing if you can join them as a co-reviewer to learn more about the process.
- Follow a structured format when you review articles to assist you, the Editor, and the authors in moving forward practical suggestions to fruition.
- Make your reviews practical, user-friendly, and filled with actionable recommendations.
- Attend to EDI principles in your reviews – you are a part of culture change.
- Be timely.
- Mentor others in reviewing as a method of giving back to the profession.

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## Thank you for attending!

### Additional Resources:

- *Psychological Services Guidelines for Reviewers*  
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/ser/guidelines-for-reviewers>
- APA Style JARS  
<https://apastyle.apa.org/jars/>
- APA Journals Reviewer Resource Center  
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/reviewers-resources>



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