
JSTA peer-review guidelines

Peer review is a central part of publishing in a professional journal and maintaining a rigorous peer-review process facilitates improving the quality of submissions. Peer review is beneficial for both the author and the reviewer and should be a positive and sometimes challenging experience. Both the author and the peer reviewer gain from the process.

Writing skills take time and practice to develop. Peer review is a useful method in developing the critical skills in writing and reviewing. Good writing skills can be applied in not just writing for publication but report writing, business plans, policy, letters and many more applications that are part of a professional role.

The peer-review process for the author provides feedback on how to improve their work and improve their writing as an author for the future. The process should be predictable and smooth to facilitate them writing again and again. For the peer reviewer it provides an opportunity to contribute to assisting publication and supporting writers. In addition, it also improves the writing of the reviewer as reviewing other people's work can make it easier to spot common errors in your own and constructing the comments and recommendations takes mastering.

This guide provides an overview in what is involved in reviewing publications submitted to the *JSTA*.

HOW IT WORKS

You will be sent an email request from the editor via the manuscript system. The email will contain links to accept, decline and to view the article.

You need to choose to accept or decline the review via the links in the email. If you are unable to, please be honest and respond accordingly. You may decline because you are not familiar with the content, or you may have too many other commitments or be just about to take a holiday so will be away. Once you accept an article, the manuscript system will send reminders every two weeks. Stay in touch with the editor if there are any difficulties with meeting the deadline.

CONDUCTING YOUR REVIEW

Read the submission at least once fully before passing any kind of judgement on the work. On the second read through, ask yourself how the paper would interest the readership and is it suitable for the *JSTA*, is it complete, or are there missing components such as an abstract, introduction, conclusions? If it is a research paper, identify any major flaws. On the third read through, write a list of comments and recommendations. Identify presentational problems with figures and tables.

GIVING FEEDBACK

The author wants feedback and to know that their work is of value. Authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. The more detailed the feedback the more useful it is in improving the quality of the work. Aim for balance and completeness in pointing out problem areas, comment on specific examples of strengths or problem areas.

If there is current literature that relates to the topic and it is not mentioned, then identify this in your review.

Don't rewrite for the author sentences or structure. Identify the issue and give an example to help the author revise the manuscript. For first-time authors all negative feedback can prevent them from writing again. Be mindful of how you word your feedback. Also be reassured that the editor also checks feedback before it is sent to the author for revision.

COMMENTS, CRITICISM, LINGUISTIC SUGGESTIONS

Comments should be clear so that the author fully understands what actions they need to take to improve their work. They may cover content, style or presentation. Provide detailed comments in a list so the author can work through them.

Your feedback and comments are useful to the editor who will feed back to the author the required revisions.

MAKING A RECOMMENDATION

When providing the review you will need to make a recommendation to the editor regarding publication. You will also be able to provide some confidential feedback to the editor. This is a good place to write concerns about plagiarism, conflict of interest or other concerns about the work. Write them in a manner that is respectful to the author if they were to read them.

The key decisions provided on the manuscript system are:

- **Accept** — if there are no changes and the paper is suitable for publication in its current form.
- **Minor revision** — if the paper would be ready for publication with some small revisions.
- **Major revision** — if there are substantial changes required such as rewriting sections of the text, expanding on the literature review.
- **Reject** — if the paper is not suitable for this journal.

WHAT THE ROLE OF PEER REVIEW IS NOT

You may disagree with the author's opinions and must let them stand provided they are consistent with current evidence.

You do not need to make corrections to punctuation, grammar and structure. The editor will correct these. If there are major issues with a submission relating to grammar then a constructive comment to revise this is sufficient.

REVISIONS

Once revisions have been completed the author will resubmit and the editor checks that the revisions have been carried out satisfactorily. The paper may also be sent to the original reviewer.

TO FINISH

The peer-review process is confidential and the author is not able to find out which peer reviewers evaluated their work. Conversely, the same applies, so please do not approach the editor for such information.

For first-time authors and experienced authors writing and submitting work for publication is a process. The process of peer review should encourage and facilitate more writing and help both the author and peer reviewer develop their writing skills. It is extremely rewarding for both parties. Please contact the editor if you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer for the *JSTA*.

REFERENCES

- Jones, L. Reviewer guidelines and best practice. Accessed 25/9/17 <http://editorresources.taylorandfrancisgroup.com/reviewers-guidelines-and-best-practice/>
- Wiley. Step by step guide to reviewing a manuscript. Accessed 18/10/17 <https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html>
- <http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines.pdf>