

# How to write a review comment



Distributed at workshop by  
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**ed/tage**  
by CACTUS

## Lecturer Intro



**Editor & Trainer, Academia CACTUS**

**Program Coordinator** 

**Certified Editor** 

Over 1000 papers revised

*A strong functional knowledge of the concerns researchers and academics have when writing in English*

# Objectives

- Elements of this session:
  1. Intent of peer review
  2. How to structure comments
  3. Examples



## Guidelines and responsibilities

Duties of Editors	Duties of Reviewers	Duties of Authors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publication decision</li><li>• Fair play</li><li>• Confidentiality</li><li>• Disclosure and Conflicts of interest</li><li>• Involvement and cooperation in investigations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribution to Editorial Decision</li><li>• Promptness</li><li>• Confidentiality</li><li>• Standards of Objectivity</li><li>• Acknowledgement of Source</li><li>• Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reporting standards</li><li>• Data Access and Retention</li><li>• Originality and Plagiarism</li><li>• Multiple, Redundant or Concurrent Publications</li><li>• Acknowledgement of Sources</li><li>• Authorship of the Paper</li><li>• Hazards and Human or Animal Subjects</li><li>• Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest</li><li>• Fundamental errors in published works</li></ul>





## Starting Point: Journal Expectations

Follow Journal guidelines for:

- Topic covered
- Format
- Reference style
- Length
- Figures/Tables
- Content

The screenshot shows the AIP Publishing Author Resource Center website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for About, Publications, Librarians, Authors, Publishing Partners, Advertisers, Careers, and Contact Us. Below the menu, the page is titled "Author Resource Center" and includes a welcome message and a link to download complete author instructions. The main content is organized into three columns: "Before you begin", "Prepare your manuscript", and "Submit your manuscript".

Before you begin	Prepare your manuscript	Submit your manuscript
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Why publish with AIP?</li><li>Find the right journal</li><li>Ethics &amp; Responsibilities<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conflict of Interest</li><li>Ethics and Responsibilities</li><li>Creative Commons licensing terms</li></ul></li><li>Web posting guidelines</li><li>Rights and permissions</li><li>Copyright and re-use FAQs</li><li>Preserving scholarly research</li><li>AIP Open Access policy</li><li>Retraction and correction policy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General guidelines<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Preparing your manuscript</li><li>Guidelines for specific journals</li><li>Guidelines for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names</li><li>Assistance for non-native English authors</li></ul></li><li>Graphics and media<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Preparing graphics</li><li>Supporting data</li></ul></li><li>Sample manuscripts for AIP Journals</li><li>Author permission FAQ</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Manuscript preparation checklist</li><li>Submit your manuscript via Peer X-Press</li><li>Submitted manuscript status</li><li>Accepted article status</li></ul>

<http://publishing.aip.org/authors>



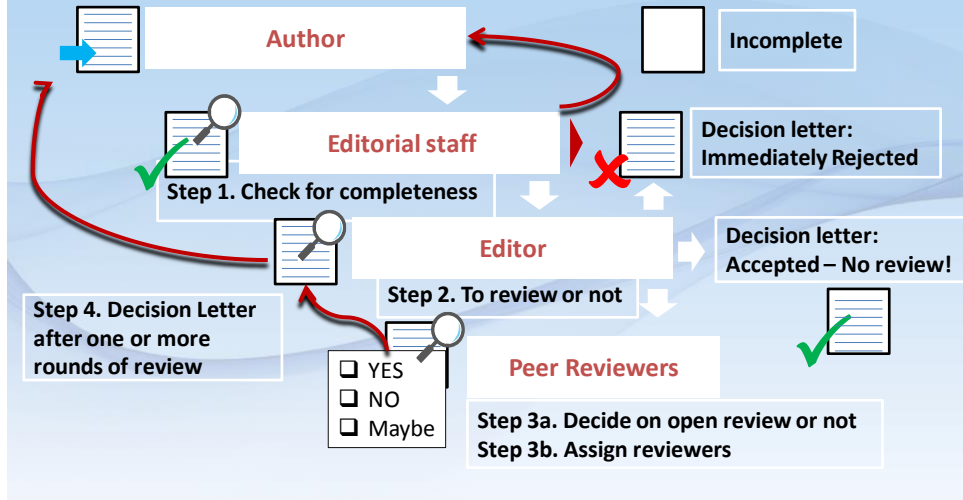
## Modern peer review system

- What – Peer review of academic articles, as we know it now
- Who – Researchers as authors, journal editors, & reviewers
- Where – UK, US, Europe, Asia





## Steps in processing and review



## An ideal peer reviewer asks

- “Who would be interesting in reading the paper, and why?”
- “Are the claims novel? If not, which published papers compromise novelty?”
- “Are the claims convincing? If not, what further evidence is needed?”



## Check for completeness

- Manuscript type
- Parts submitted
- Content and formatting
- Author list, suggested reviewers, competing interests or policy restrictions
- Missing content, problems or special requests

Hames I. Peer Review and Manuscript Management in Scientific Journals: Guidelines for Good Practice. Wiley-Blackwell; 2007

## How to read a paper

### Steps for a thorough, critical reading

- ◆ Step 1 Prepare the draft
- ◆ Step 2 Preliminary check
- ◆ Step 3 Detailed check
- ◆ Step 4 Consistency check of parts
- ◆ Step 5 Final, overall review



## Step 1: Prepare the draft

- Print single pages with wide margins
- Separate all sections
- Keep tables and figures in the forefront
- Keep track of word usage and terminology



## Step 2: Preliminary check

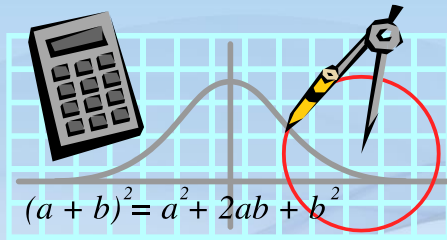
- Title and abstract
- Tables & figures
  - ◆ Compare with methods
- Aim or hypothesis in introduction
- Background and rationale





## Step 3: Detailed check of sections

- Tables and figures
- Aim or hypothesis
- Tables and figures
- Background
- Methods
- Results – including tables and figures
- Discussion
- Tables and figures
- Title, abstract and keywords



## Tables: Details

- Do the tables have a complete title and footer?
- Are all acronyms and unit modifiers identified?
- Are tables understandable without referral to the text?



## Complete tables

TABLE I. Dimensions of the fabricated TSVs.

Sample No.	S1	S2	S3	S4
TSV diameter ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	30	50	80	80
TSV pitch ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	60	150	250	250
TSV height ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	300	300	390	390
Front Si thickness ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	13	50	55	40
Liner thickness ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	1	1	1	25
Liner material	SiO <sub>2</sub>	SiO <sub>2</sub>	SiO <sub>2</sub>	SU-8

TABLE II. Material properties.<sup>3,18,19</sup>

	Cu	Si	SiO <sub>2</sub>	SU-8
Young's modulus (GPa)	70	130.9	71.4	4.02
Poisson ratio	0.3	0.28	0.16	0.22
CTE (ppm/°C)	17.3	2.6	0.5	52

## Figures: Details

Are figures:

- ◆ Appropriate and on target?
- ◆ Essential in the context of the aim or hypothesis?





## Nonessential representation in a figure

The sample of this study was composed of 63.4% women and 36.6% men (see Figure I).

*Sage Open* (2011)  
DOI: 10.1177/2158244011433338

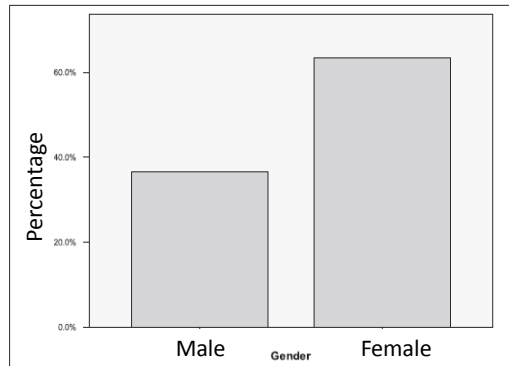


Figure I. Gender of participants

## Tables & figures: Validity

Check for inconsistencies. For example:

- ◆ Date on photo does not match the period of study
- ◆ Description in text does not match the figure title and details
- ◆ Data in a table seems too perfect
- ◆ The graph depicts a regular distribution but the statistical analysis is for a skewed distribution



## Check aim or hypothesis

In the introduction, are the authors:

- ◆ Opposing an existing assumption
- ◆ Revealing a gap in existing research
- ◆ Formulating a research question or problem
- ◆ Continuing a disciplinary tradition

## Check background

- Do references match statements?
- Are there any statements without references?
- Are descriptions of past studies relevant to the present study?





## Spot check background statements

“One study [4] reported that there was a positive and continuous relationship between maternal glycemia and size at birth weight.”

### Reference

4. Metzger BE, Lowe LP, Dyer AR, Trimble ER, Chaovarindr U et al. (2008) Hyperglycemia and adverse pregnancy outcomes. *N Engl J Med* 358: 1991-2002. doi:10.1056/NEJMoa0707943. PubMed: 18463375.

Kabeja Y et al. (2013) History of Having a Macrosomic Infant and the Risk of Diabetes: The Japan Public Health Center-Based Prospective Diabetes Study. *PLoS ONE* 8(12): e84542. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0084542.t001

## Verify methods

Did authors design a scientifically valid study?

- ◆ Theoretical or statistical model?

Are the “who, what, where and how” described adequately?



## What matters about the model

- “The most important thing about a model is what is left out.” – David Schriger
- Measurement + Measurement error + Selection bias
- What are the assumptions?

Callahan M., Schriger D., Cooper RJ. An Instructional Guide for Peer Reviewers of Biomedical Manuscripts. *Annals of Emergency Medicine*. Available at <http://www.annemergmed.com/pb/assets/raw/Health%20Advance/journals/ymem/index.html>



## Examine results

- Overall structure follows methods with no missing parts
- Did the authors follow methods as planned?
  - ◆ Describe primary outcomes first, before any other
  - ◆ Leave out results of procedures described in methods
  - ◆ Add in results of procedures not described in methods
- Check for completeness or redundancies in tables, figures, and text

## *Results: Check for completeness*

### Overall structure

- ◆ Subheadings similar to those in methods?
- ◆ In the same order?



## *Methods “guide” Results*

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Study design and subjects | 1. Study conducted <b>as planned?</b><br>Subjects participated <b>as planned?</b> |
| 2. Materials                 | 2. Materials used <b>as planned?</b>  |
| 3. Procedures                | 3. Procedure followed <b>as planned?</b>  |
| 4. Methods of analysis       | 4. Methods of analysis, followed <b>as planned?</b>                               |

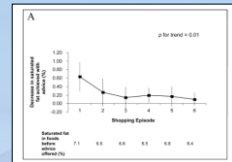
## Return to tables & figures

### Check for redundancies in

Table 2. Effects of Intervention on Primary Outcome

Group	n	Decrease in Percent Saturated Fat after Advice, % (95% CI)	p-Value within Treatment Group	Decrease in Percent Saturated Fat in Intervention versus Control, % (95% CI)	p-Value between Treatment Groups
Control	251	0.04 (0.00-0.08)	0.07	0.66 (0.48-0.84)	<0.001
Intervention	246	0.77 (0.60-0.94)	<0.001		

The primary outcome was the mean percent of saturated fat in the purchased items that were one of the 524 foods studied.  
CI, confidence interval.  
DOI: 10.1371/journal.pctr.0010022.1002



#### RESULTS

##### Participants

A total of 4,548 individuals were offered participation, and 497 were randomised (251 intervention and 246 control) (Figure 1). Of these, 456 (224 intervention and 232 control) completed at least one episode of shopping that included one or more of the 524 foods studied. Median follow-up time

Huang A et al. (2006) The effects on saturated fat purchases of providing Internet shoppers with purchase-specific dietary advice: A randomised trial. PLoS Clin Trials 1(5):e22. doi:10.1371/journal.pctr.0010022



## Check discussion

Did the authors interpret results considering limitations of research?

- ◆ Restate the hypothesis or aim
- ◆ Discuss whether the aim was achieved, or not
- ◆ Discuss whether the hypothesis was correct, or not
- ◆ Interpret primary results first, not the best results first
- ◆ Compare results with those of closely related, previous studies
- ◆ Discuss limitations or negative results
- ◆ Discuss the value of research and how it might be applied

## Return to tables & figures

- Do the tables and interpretation of results match?
  - ◆ Check the statistical results in table
  - ◆ Check interpretation of statistical results in text



## Step 4: Consistency of parts

- Check overall consistency words used in paper
  - ◆ Abstract, title & header title, keywords
  - ◆ Aim or hypothesis in paper and in abstract
  - ◆ Description of methods in paper, abstract and supplements
  - ◆ Primary and secondary results and sub-analyses results
  - ◆ Numbers and unit modifiers in text, abstract
  - ◆ Conclusion in abstract against interpretation in discussion

## Step 5: Final, overall review

- Scientific merit
- Originality
- Validity (statistical or as the field defines)
- Presentation quality
  - ◆ Following manuscript instructions
  - ◆ Following prescribed external guidelines, including ethical ones
  - ◆ Language



## Follow instructions of journal: PLOS One

- Reviewer comments to the author
  - ◆ Technical soundness of the work
  - ◆ Rigor of the analysis
  - ◆ Adherence to our data availability policy
  - ◆ Clear use of English language
- Reviewer declares any competing interests





## Typical checklist

- Identifying information and method of handling
- Type of manuscript and general instructions
- Checking all required parts and English
- Author list, suggested reviewers, competing interests, any restrictions
- Problems or special requests

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Hames I. Peer Review and Manuscript Management in Scientific Journals: Guidelines for Good Practice. Wiley-Blackwell; 2007

New Manuscript Checklist				
Manuscript ref. no:		Date rec'd	Editor	
Corresponding author:				
Manuscript type:	Article	Review	Letter	Editorial
Resubmission:	No	Yes →	– previous ref. no – response letter	No Yes
Supplementary material:	No	Yes →	– for external review – to be published – file size OK – any author websites	No Yes No Yes No Yes
Colour:	No	Yes →	– figures – colour fee waiver requested	No Yes
Cover image:	No	Yes →	– where located	
Related manuscript(s):	No	Yes →	– for external review	No Yes
Pages numbered:	No	Yes	Word count:	.....
Section order OK:	No	Yes	No. tables:	.....
Title OK:	No	Yes	No. figures:	.....
Running head OK:	No	Yes	Figure quality OK:	No Yes
Abstract OK:	No	Yes	All legends included:	No Yes
Keywords:	No	Yes	English OK:	No Yes
Author list checked:	No	Yes	All affiliations given:	No Yes
Suggested reviewers:	No	Yes	Non-preferred reviewers:	No Yes
Any competing interests:	No	Yes →	what?	.....
Any policy restrictions:	No	Yes →	what?	.....
Anything missing:	No	Yes →	what?	.....
Any problems:	No	Yes →	what?	.....
Any special requests:	No	Yes →	what?	.....
Handled by:	Date to editor		Notes	
Date complete/ready for transfer:				



## Reviewer comments to author

- Summarize paper and provide general, positive comments  
It is obvious that you carefully followed STROBE (**ST**rengthening the Reporting of **OB**servational studies in Epidemiology). Your tables & figures and interpretation of results are commendable.
- Point out inconsistencies that require clarification  
The weight for defining macrosomia in infants in the USA is  $\geq 4500$  g. Please explain why you used the value  $\geq 4000$  g.
- Point out gross inaccuracies, missing information, or potential ethical issues  
None were found in this report.
- Point out language, style, and formatting problems  
There were various problems with spacing and units of measure in the document. Please be sure to have the document proofread by a professional editor.

Positive



Negative

Kabeya Y et al. (2013) PLoS ONE 8(12): e84542





## Comment examples

The English is bad.



## Comment examples

Your points were good, however, needs more focusing to persuade the readers. Thank you for the application.



## Comment examples

Line 9: Of the respiratory events, the most common specific mechanism was hypoxia secondary to airway obstruction or respiratory depression related to non-anesthesiologists-administered propofol (35 cases). → What was the main mechanism of adverse events by the anesthesiologists ?



## Comment examples

Line 13: ASA-CCP prompted the Korean Society of Anesthesiologists (KSA) to set up its own similar project in 2009 → “ASA-CCP prompted” seems unnecessary.



## Comment examples

- Line 5: with the aim of identifying potential means for preventing anesthesia-related injuries.  
→ However, writers confirmed the importance of strict adherence to established practical guidelines for patient safety. I think you can focus more on the important events and suggest the specific means.



## Comment examples

Line 12: For further analyses, these 11 categories were ... → only 7 categories in this manuscript



## Comment examples

This study provides a better clinical use for postoperative pain management after total knee arthroplasty. However, the paper must be reedited by a native English speaker and the following items should be addressed.

1. How to determine the sample size in the study protocol?
2. The side effects during the observational time frame should be recorded.
3. The descriptions regarding PCIA were unclear.
4. As the VAS and ROM scores were evaluated at different time points in the four groups, the statistical analysis would be prefer to two-way analysis of variance.
5. The P values and confidence intervals for the main results should be supplemented.
6. How the patients were assigned to different groups, and how can this study be double blinded?
7. The number of the group C in the table 1 was incorrect.
8. The result of VAS scores of the rest status at T4 time point between the B and C groups should be discussed.



## Comment examples

Finally, it is not easy to prepare manuscript written by English as foreigner; however, I recommend you get some help to edit the draft from an English-native or similarly experienced proofreader.



## Comment examples

Minor comments:

1. Please provide a Table listing all 3621 up-regulated and 1634 down-regulated genes in gastric cancer. This could be provided as a Supplementary data .
2. E2F-1 was shown to up-regulate genes that play a role in DNA synthesis including TS, DHFR and RR. These genes are overexpressed in GI cancers, as demonstrated in cell lines and the patients sample. It will be of interest to include such information in the manuscript
3. Conclusion sentence in the Abstract should be more informative

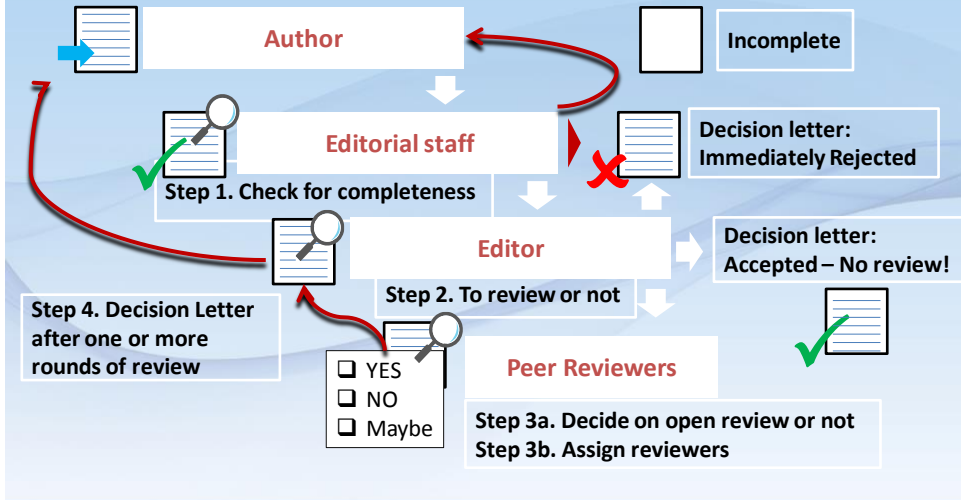
## Reviewer recommendations to editor

- Accept with minor revisions
- Accept with major revisions
- Reject (will accept after additional tests or analyses)
- Reject (faulty research design, insufficient number of subjects, non registration of a trial)





## Summation of process



## Take-home message

- **Read**
  - ◆ Critically
  - ◆ Kindly
  - ◆ Constructively
- **Write**
  - ◆ Critically
  - ◆ Kindly
  - ◆ Constructively



## Contact Details

Discounts on  
next editing service?  
Register on website  
for details!



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**Have questions?**  
Get responses for the  
next month at  
[training@editage.com](mailto:training@editage.com)!

Dr. Eddy™ personifies our efforts to support authors with good publication practices. He can be found at **Editage Insights**  
<http://www.editage.com/insights/tutorials>