

What is peer review?

During the peer review process, experts in the field evaluate a manuscript and provide timely, thorough, and unbiased feedback regarding its quality, validity, and significance, including suggestions for improvement. Your contribution as a reviewer is of vital importance to maintaining the integrity and quality of scholarly publications and is very much appreciated. The two most common types of peer review are:

- **Single-anonymous**, where reviewers know the authors' identities, but the authors do not know the reviewers'.
- **Double-anonymous**, where the identities of both authors and reviewers are concealed from each other.

General pointers

Where to find general information

If you want to know more about a journal or book series, we advise you to have a look at the journal's or series' webpage; this page will usually contain information regarding the scope of the publication, author instructions, peer review model, etc. You can also find publication content on this page.

Communication with the editor

If the editor wants you to review, you will be contacted (generally via email). Upon receipt of the request, the editor appreciates a quick response whether you agree or decline to review so that we can keep delays at a minimum (if you need guidance here, check the [COPE flowchart](#)). Likewise, if you need more time to complete your review, please consult with the editor or the editorial office. Other reasons to contact the editor would be:

- In case of a potential conflict of interest;
- If you discover ethical issues with the manuscript (e.g., plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication of data). Detailed information and guidance regarding ethics can be found on the [COPE website](#) as well as on the [Brill](#) and [De Gruyter](#) websites.
- If you wish to collaborate with another specialist in the field on your review;
- If the manuscript is clearly out of scope;
- If you have any other questions.

Confidentiality

In the peer review process, confidentiality is key. We therefore ask for your assistance in maintaining confidentiality. You can do this in the following ways:

- Anonymize your review: please do not include your name or other clues that may inadvertently disclose your identity in your review.
- Even if you know the author's identity, please do not include their name(s) in your review.
- Please note that the manuscript itself, including an abstract, is considered confidential and should therefore not be shared with others without express consent of the author/editor. Should you wish to confer with other experts for your review, please consult with the editor before doing so.

- The manuscript or any parts thereof should not be entered into AI systems as this contradicts the principle of confidentiality. For more information, see below.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

The manuscript or any parts thereof should not be entered into AI systems, such as Chat GPT, Grammarly, etc. Verifying how these platforms handle data is impossible; thus, any uploads may compromise the authors' confidentiality, proprietary or data privacy rights, which does not comply with publishing standards. Peer review requires critical thinking and nuanced assessment, tasks that fall beyond the capabilities of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies (prone to generate incorrect, incomplete, or biased conclusions). Therefore, the responsibility for peer review lies exclusively with humans.

How to write a review

Below are some questions to consider when reviewing a manuscript and writing your review.

Not all points may be applicable to all subject areas or publications.

Review questions

Scope

Does the contribution you are reviewing fall within the scope of this publication? Is the work targeted at the right audience? Does the manuscript comply with the publication's guidelines?

Structure, coherence and completeness

Is the manuscript internally cohesive, with each section contributing meaningfully? Are any key elements missing? Is it well-structured, clearly organized, and to the point? Does it meet the publication's structural requirements?

Theoretical framework

Does the contribution advance the understanding of existing theory or data? Are key concepts, objectives, and any underlying theories accurate, clearly defined, and logically justified? Is the research question or hypothesis explicitly stated in the introduction?

Literature and references

Does the contribution cite relevant, up-to-date sources, avoiding excessive or insufficient citations? Are any essential references missing? Do the references follow the recommended style without excessive self-citation?

Methods

Are the methods used suitable for addressing the research question? Is the overall design appropriate for the study's goals? Are the techniques clearly described, allowing transparency and reproducibility? If statistical methods are used, are they appropriate and accurately applied?

Data, figures, and tables

Are the results presented in a clear, logical order, and the data sources adequately described to allow replication? Are figures and tables clear, properly labeled, and effective in conveying the data? Do the figures and results align with the methods used and support the study's conclusions?

Reliability of results and validity of conclusions

Does the manuscript provide a meaningful contribution to the field? Are strengths, limitations, and implications clearly stated? Are alternative explanations and unexpected findings addressed? Additionally, are the conclusions clearly stated and backed by the data presented?

Originality/novelty of the work and significance

Does the manuscript make a meaningful contribution to the field (e.g., by proposing a new thesis, demonstrating a novel approach, or offering a valuable synthesis of existing research)? Are the ideas original and do they provide new insights into the field? Is the significance of the work clearly articulated and justified by the authors?

Ethical issues

All manuscripts should comply with ethics standards as described on the [COPE website](#) as well as on the publisher's websites: [De Gruyter Brill](#). We encourage you to direct any questions and concerns to the editor and the [publisher's ethics teams](#).

In particular: Please check whether all ethical and consent statements required by the study are presented by the authors.

Do not recommend citations of your own work, works of your colleagues or other authors unless such additions are justified in order to improve the quality of the manuscript under review.

Language

Always keep in mind that your primary role is to evaluate the research content and not to spend too much time polishing grammar or spelling. If it is difficult or impossible to understand the content of the manuscript, you should recommend rejection. However, if the language is poor but you understand the essence, you can recommend rejection, with a note to the editor that the manuscript could be resubmitted after language editing, or you can include suggestions for improvement.

Summary of your conclusions

This section should summarize the key points of the review, providing a clear basis for the final recommendation. By aligning the main observations with well-supported reasoning and evidence, this section enhances the credibility of your evaluation and assists the editor in making an informed decision and the authors in improving their manuscripts.

Final recommendation

The final recommendation is a crucial part of the review, summarizing the reviewer's overall assessment of the work. The review should be structured to support this recommendation, with clear reasoning and evidence provided.

- **Accept in Present Form:** the contribution is of high quality and requires no further changes.
- **Minor Revisions:** minor adjustments are recommended, such as clarifications or additional citations that can be completed quickly by the authors.
- **Major Revisions:** substantial improvements are needed, such as further experiments, enhanced arguments, or additional literature; resubmission is only advised if these changes are achievable.
- **Rejection:** the contribution has serious flaws, lacks originality, does not meet scientific standards; resubmission is not recommended.

Tone of the review

As the name suggests, *peer review* is about taking your colleagues and their work seriously. This means keeping the general tone and approach of your review respectful and collegial:

- **Be specific** in your criticism and avoid sweeping statements without explanation.
- **Focus on the content** of a contribution. While poor language or the need for copyediting should be addressed, they do not necessarily invalidate the research itself.
- **Express your own uncertainty** where applicable and be transparent if there are sections which you are not able or suited to evaluate.

- **Criticize the work, not the author.** Phrases such as "this contribution fails to..." are preferable to "this author fails to..."
- **Always try to say something supportive.** Negative criticism is easier to accept when balanced with complimentary comments.

Happy reviewing!