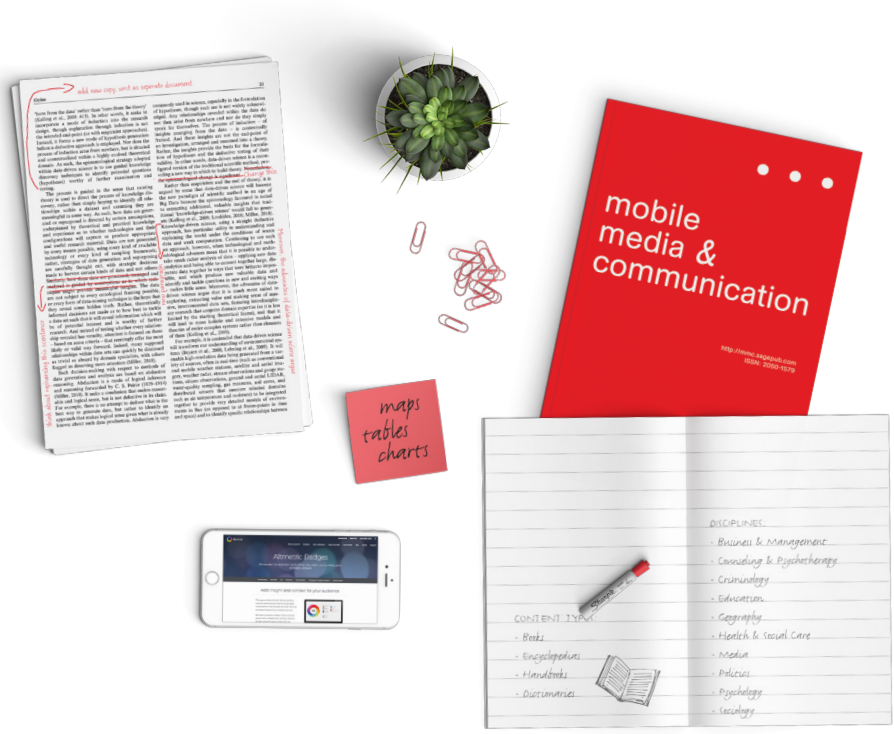

Reviewer's Guide

Peer review is essential for filtering out poor quality articles by assessing the validity and integrity of the research

SAGE journals

We value the work done by peer reviewers in the academic community, who facilitate the process of publication and drive research within their fields of expertise

Why should you be a peer reviewer?

- Contribute to the development of your field
- Stay up-to-date in your field
- Improve your ability to research and write papers
- Increased collaboration with journal editors, which may result in new opportunities such as invitation to join an editorial board
- Get an understanding of the publication process
- Get recognition for your peer review
- Reviewers are the quality controllers of the research world - they make sure the research being published is good quality

Types of peer review

- Single-blind peer review – the name of the reviewer is hidden from the author
- Double-blind peer review – names are hidden from both reviewers and the authors
- Open peer review – everyone is identified

Tip:

Register with **Publons** to track, verify and showcase your peer review contributions

Peer review is a largely reciprocal endeavour and you will benefit at some stage from the work of peer reviewers on your own paper.

How does peer review work?

Most **SAGE Journals** use the **SAGE Track system**, powered by ScholarOne™. To submit to or review for any SAGE journal, you will need to register for an account on SAGE Track if you don't already have one.

***Note**:The journal editor may need to approve your application to review*

1. Paper submitted

Tip: Increase your chances of being selected to review by providing an institutional email address, adding keywords to your account, or linking your account with your ORCID

2. Checked for compliance with journal guidelines

3. Fits within the journal's aims & scope?

- Desk Reject

4. Sent out for peer review

Tip: the invitation to review will include an abstract of the paper; read this before making your decision to accept or decline. If the paper is outside of your expertise, you may need to update your keywords. You may also wish to suggest alternative reviewers if you are unable to review the paper.

5. Peer reviewers selected by keywords*

*__Tip:__ make sure the keywords in your SAGE Track account are as full and accurate as possible to ensure only suitable manuscripts are sent to you to review

6. Email sent to reviewer

- **Decline:** If you don't have the time or particular knowledge to complete the review, or you have a bias or conflicts of interest that would prevent you from giving a fair review, please **decline** the invitation. If you simply ignore the email, you will be sent automatic follow-ups and it will delay the paper's review process

7. **Accept:** Please take note of the deadline set in the confirmation email and advise the editor if you encounter delays

8. Paper will appear in your 'Reviewer Centre' in SAGE Track

9. Make recommendations to Editor

Basic principles of Reviewing

- Only agree to review manuscripts within your area of expertise for which you can return your comments in a timely manner
- Respect the confidentiality of the process
- Be objective and constructive in your review
- Declare all conflicts of interest

Conflict of Interest

Personal, professional or financial relationship with any party involved in the manuscript

See the **COPE website** for full **ethical guidelines for reviewers**

So, you've agreed to review a paper... now what?

01 Initial Impression

Read the whole paper through before you start your in-depth review to get an initial impression

What to look out for and comment on

- Is this paper relevant for the journal?
- Is this research significant within the field?
- Is the work presented novel? Does it add to the subject area?

What to keep an eye on

- Does the title properly reflect the subject of the paper?
- Do the keywords reflect the content and are they up-to-date? For example, are the keywords broad enough to lure in readers with a broad interest in the topic but narrow enough to accurately reflect the contents of the paper?
- Is the paper an appropriate length?
- Are the key messages short and clear?

Note:

It is not the reviewer's job to proof-read or suggest extensive grammatical revisions to a paper. If the meaning of the paper is lost due to extensive grammatical errors, recommend the paper for language editing, via services like SAGE Language Services (https://languageservices.sagepub.com/en/).

02 Sections of the Paper

Abstract

After reading the abstract, you should already understand the aims, key data and conclusions of the manuscript. If you don't, make a note of this

Introduction

- Is it clear, short and simple?
- Does it set the scene i.e. explain the background to the study?
- Does it set out and justify the aim of the study?
- Does the literature review include the latest research?

Methods

Academic research should be rigorous and replicable – is all the relevant detail included in this section?

Consider:

- Have all necessary procedures been followed (for example, health and safety of participants in the study)?
- Have the correct guidelines been followed? (e.g. CONSORT, PRISMA)
- Are the methods used appropriate?

Ethical standards

If the paper has failed to adhere to best practice standards, for example, the paper is not properly referenced, it does not require further review and should be rejected

Results

The authors should report the results of all tests noted in the Methods section:

- Demographics – age, gender, side, site etc.
- Objective data
- Subjective data
- Complications of treatment
- Ask yourself: do the numbers make sense?
- Are the results clearly formatted and presented? Are SI units and other notation correct, and are graphs, axis heading, data labels readable?

Remember:

If a test is not stated in the Methods section then the results may not be reported in the Results

Discussion

- This should not be a repetition of the results
- It should put the results of the study in context i.e. how does it fit in with what we already know?
- Do the authors achieve their stated aim (in the Introduction)?

Look out for:

Major flaws in data, tables, figures and images

- Insufficient data
- Statistical variations
- Unclear or contradictory data

- Have they cited all relevant/ important published papers?
- Can you follow the reasoning of the paper?

The authors should compare their data with previous published studies to:

- Confirm similarities i.e. validate the study further
- Explain differences

Conclusion

Finally, the authors should describe:

- The limitations of the study
- The "take home" message as a short conclusion

Consider:

- Does the conclusion address the question/s posed? Is it consistent with the evidence and arguments presented?
- Is the conclusion contradicted by the author's evidence?

03 Your Feedback

Giving advice to authors and suggesting revisions

- Demonstrate that you have read the paper. You may wish to include an opening paragraph summarising the paper.
- Be objective, specific and constructive
- Be clear about what needs to be added or revised
- Give clear and detailed comments to the Editor
- Give constructive comments to the author/s to help them with any revisions
- If appropriate, make suggestions about additional literature that the author might read to improve their manuscript*

Some journals allow you to make two sets of comments, one of which is directed to the attention of the editor only and the other that the editor can send on to the author to allow you to direct questions or recommendations appropriately

Tip:

Number your comments – this will make it easier for the author and editor to refer back to.

Making a recommendation

Most journals will ask you to recommend whether a paper should be accepted, rejected or revised (major or minor revisions), and you may be asked to look over the changes made to a paper to ensure that improvements have been adequately made

Have an overall view of the quality of the paper and consider if it is good enough to be published in the journal

Remember to keep all activity, content and comments relating to the paper confidential

Issues to consider

- Are there major flaws i.e. factual errors?
- Are there problems with the presentation of the data or arguments?
- Is any of the information unclear or ambiguous?
- Has similar work been published?
- Will the work be impactful?
- Are there any ethical issues?

Be as specific and detailed as you can; brief comments to an Editor will not help them make a decision

*As per COPE guidelines, reviewers should not suggest that authors include citations to the reviewer's work merely to increase their citation count or to enhance the visibility of their work; suggestions **must** be based on valid academic or technological reasons

04 Ethics and Responsibility

Consider the following before undertaking a review:

- Think carefully about your own potential conflicts of interest relating to the paper before undertaking the review.
- Notify the editor if you become aware of the identity of the author during blind peer review.
- Be careful not to make judgements about the paper based on personal, financial, intellectual biases or any other considerations than the quality of the research and written presentation of the paper.
- You may wish to involve junior researchers in the review of an article as it can be good experience for that person. However, you should ensure that you obtain permission from the journal Editor prior to accepting the invitation to review.
- Submit the names of everyone involved in doing the review to the Editor so that the journal records accurately reflect the review process as it was conducted.

Tip:

We encourage reviewers to refer to the Guidelines for Peer reviewers available on the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) website prior to carrying out the process.

SAGE takes issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism or other breaches of best practice in publication very seriously.

Where an article, for example, is found to have plagiarised other work or included third-party copyright material without permission or with insufficient acknowledgement, or where the authorship of the article is contested, we would encourage reviewers to alert the journal editor to this.

The journal reserves the right to take action including, but not limited to:

- publishing an erratum or corrigendum (correction);
- retracting the article;
- taking up the matter with the head of department or dean of the author's institution and/or relevant academic bodies or societies;
- or taking appropriate legal action.

What to do if you suspect there are problems with an article

If you suspect any of the following problems with any article you are reviewing, contact the journal editor to discuss the situation without delay. You should keep all information about such matters confidential and not discuss them with colleagues other than the journal editor.

- You suspect that the paper has been either published or submitted to another journal.
- You suspect that the paper is duplicating the work of others.
- You suspect that there might be problems with the ethics of the research conducted.
- You suspect that there might be an undeclared conflict of interest attached to the paper (editors might have more information about this than you do so it is best to check).

Resources:

SAGE Reviewer Gateway **us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal-reviewer-gateway**

Committee on Publication Ethics **publicationethics.org/**

Reviewer Rewards **uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/reviewer-rewards**

Get Credit for your Reviews with Publons **publons.com/home/**

ORCID **sagepub.com/orcid**

SAGE journals