

Writing a Good Referee Report

Author

Enago Academy

Post Url

<https://www.enago.com/academy/writing-a-good-referee-report/>

Peer review is a crucial part of scholarly communication. During this process, authors ideally receive helpful comments on the significance and novelty of their work as well as suggestions on how to improve it. The end goal is to ensure that only high-quality research is published, and to prevent—as far as possible—the distribution of incorrect or fraudulent data.

However, without good referees, the peer review system cannot work, so it is up to all of us to write honest and useful peer review reports. Evaluating academic articles is also an excellent way to [keep up with the literature](#) and improve our own writing skills. These tips could help you as a reviewer:

Ensuring You Have the Time and Expertise Required

Before accepting a peer-reviewing task, you should [check the deadline](#) to see if you can meet it and read the abstract carefully to make sure that the article is within your area of expertise. It is not necessary to be an absolute specialist in the subject of the paper because editors usually try to balance reviews. They normally want subject specialists, but they are also interested in the comments of generalists and researchers with experience in the methodology used. So, when asked to assess the quality of a particular manuscript, it is safe to assume that the editors had good reasons to choose you.

Are you interested in reviewing a paper but need more time to complete your report? Then you should inform the editorial office as soon as possible and ask for a short extension of the deadline (which is usually given). Remember that late reviews are not fair to the authors or the journal staff. It is important for an author, to receive timely reports, so after accepting an invitation to review a paper, make sure to set aside enough time in your schedule to read the article and write a helpful report in good time.

Being Diligent and Fair

Being a reviewer is a great responsibility where it is not only important to be rigorous and critical, but also friendly and fair. A good way to start writing a report is to list out the

positive aspects of the paper before pointing out the changes that need to be made.

In the review, [the strengths and significance of the study](#) should be evaluated along with its suitability for the journal in which it is being considered; check the accuracy and reliability of the data; identify the hypothesis and assess the methodology used; check the overall quality of the references; and make sure that the article is written in an organized and understandable way. Finally, the decision should be made giving a proper explanation on whether the authors' results are convincing or not. Remember that the article is being evaluated and not the author, so be polite and fair at all times.

Giving Productive Feedback

The goal is to help the authors improve the quality of their paper, and the best way to achieve this is by giving them concrete examples and advice. Purely negative comments without clear suggestions on how to make the manuscript better are mostly useless. Instead of writing general sentences like “the results are unclear” or “the manuscript needs to be rewritten,” the feedback should be more specific letting the authors know exactly what can be improved. Which parts of their paper are unclear and why? What changes could they make to support their claims? Are more experiments required, and if yes, which ones? Would the article benefit from a close editing? Make sure that the changes to be made are realistic and can be performed within a reasonable time.

Here are a few things to keep in mind [when reviewing an article and writing a report](#):

Dos and Don'ts of Writing a Good Peer Review Report

Dos's

Ask yourself honestly whether you have the time and expertise to review the paper.

Take your reviewing task seriously and read the manuscript carefully and critically. Write your report in an understandable and organized way.

Let the editors know if you need any additional information from the authors to help you write a balanced and substantiated report.

Start by listing out the significance and positive aspects of the manuscript and then indicate what can be improved. Comment on large issues first and go on to smaller issues later.

Evaluate the reliability of the data, hypothesis, references, and suitability of the methods as carefully as possible.

Be realistic about the changes you suggest and make sure that they can be carried out in a reasonable way.

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Writing a Good Referee Report. Enago
Academy. 2017/01/10. <https://www.enago.com/academy/writing-a-good-referee-report/>