

How to Respond to Reviews

Responding well to reviewers' feedback is an important skill for authors. Although the feedback can be difficult to receive, it is common for reviewers to request edits and advisable to craft your response carefully and respectfully. Below are guidelines for effectively responding to reviewers' feedback about submitted manuscripts for the following types of editorial decisions: Rejected, Revise and Resubmit, or Accepted (pending revisions or as is).

Types of Editorial Decisions

Rejected

Some manuscripts are rejected after review by the journal's editorial staff and are not sent for peer review. Others are rejected after peer reviewers have critically examined the manuscript. Some common reasons for rejection include:

- The manuscript is outside of the journal's scope or is better suited to another section.
- The manuscript is unclear, uninteresting, or seriously flawed (e.g., science is poor, arguments are unconvincing, data are missing).
- The journal has already published, or plans to publish, article(s) on a similar topic.
- The authors did not follow the journal's guidelines.

Rejection is never a desirable outcome, but remember that **your manuscript was rejected, not you**. If you decide to respond to a rejection letter, do so succinctly and respectfully to preserve future possibilities with the journal's editors and reviewers. If you believe there's been an error or misunderstanding, you could consider sending a respectful request for reconsideration to the journal editor. If you are fortunate enough to receive reviewer feedback, consider the comments carefully. Fix all weaknesses and unclear text identified by reviewers, and identify a new target journal. Reformat the manuscript for the new journal according to requirements, and submit it.

Revise and Resubmit

Some manuscripts receive an invitation by the editor to "revise and resubmit," which will include reviewer feedback for you to address in detail during the resubmission process. Although an editor's invitation to "**revise and resubmit**" is **not a guarantee that the manuscript will be accepted**, it is an opportunity to improve the manuscript, regardless of the final outcome. The review-resubmission process will be repeated until the manuscript is satisfactory to reviewers.

If you receive this request, respond promptly, constructively, and respectfully to all reviewer comments. Stick to the facts, be concise, and don't rant. Make all possible attempts to comply with the requested changes. All resubmissions should include a response letter (with a point-by-point explanation of the changes) and the revised manuscript (clean and highlighted versions):

- **Response Letter** should be a detailed and well-organized reply to the editor in letter format. It should list all points raised by reviewers, with a brief explanation of how each was addressed in the revision. The letter should also thank the reviewers for their insights and suggestions.
- **Revised Manuscript** should include both a final "clean" version and a highlighted version clearly showing where changes were made. Using the "track changes" function in Microsoft Word is a commonly accepted method of highlighting the changes.

Accepted

If you receive an acceptance, savor the moment! Then, **promptly complete any revisions** requested by the reviewers or editors using the process described above. The journal will copyedit the manuscript and send proofs for review prior to publication. Be sure to return the proofs promptly, as a delay could keep your article from being published.

Questions? Contact Holly Zink, Director, Research & Programs, at holly.zink@curesearch.org.