

**Reviewing a scientific paper:
What makes a good review? What makes a good paper?
The Editor's view**

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Abstract

First of all, a reviewer should observe the following ethical principles: integrity, fairness, constructiveness and expertise. *Integrity* means confidential treatment the contents of a paper and refrainment from unfavourable reviewing because oneself is engaged with similar work not yet ready for publication (avoid reviewer bias). If there is a clash of interests, decline the request to review. *Fairness* means to treat the content of a paper in its own right and not to impose one's personal opinion. *Constructiveness* means to take a positive attitude and to recommend changes that will improve the paper. This may also involve language corrections. *Expertise* means that one should only accept a request to review if one feels comfortable with the subject matter.

Before beginning a review, READ the paper (and, if not already familiar, also the journal instructions to authors)! In doing so, mentally note the logics of the structure, overall length, balance between sections, readability (syntax and expression) and the main thrust of the paper. Then decide whether the scientific content has sufficient merit for publication a) at international level and b) in that particular journal. If not, concentrate on arguments justifying rejection. If yes, proceed with point by point evaluation.

Title: Does the title adequately reflect the contents and is it inviting to the reader? **Abstract:** Is the abstract a concise summary of what was done why, when, where, how and with what main results and implications? This can only be decided at the end of the review! **Introduction:** Is the reader adequately introduced to the subject matter (proceeding from a global perspective to the local or regional issue) and the state of the art? Are the rationale and aims (objectives) of the study clearly stated at the end of the Introduction? **Methods:** Are all materials, methods and data sources clearly defined, identified and explained? **Results:** Are the results accurately presented and arranged in logical order? Is there perhaps evidence for duplication of previously published data? **Discussion:** Are the results adequately discussed in the light of the international literature? **Conclusions:** If not already included in the Discussion, do the conclusions highlight the main findings and their implications in a number of concise statements? Note that the Conclusions must not be a mere summary! The Abstract serves that purpose. **Acknowledgements:** There is always someone or some institution that deserves acknowledgement, including the reviewers! **References:** Do the literature citations in the text match those in the reference list and vice versa, and does the format comply with the conventions of the journal? Note that sloppy referencing is often a nightmare for editors! **Figures/Tables:** Are figures/tables cited in the correct sequence when first mentioned? Are figures of sufficient quality and clarity?

Once a review is completed, give the author(s) clear and point by point instructions of how to improve the paper, and the editor a non-ambiguous recommendation concerning the revision. Note that the inverse of a good review is a blueprint for writing a good paper!