

Authors Are Responsible to Serve as Reviewers



A manuscript typically goes through the following steps on its way to being published in a scientific journal:

1. Planning and preparation of an outline
2. Writing the first draft of the manuscript
3. Review by the author
4. Revision by the author
5. Review by 2 or 3 associates
6. Revision by the author
7. Review by 2 or 3 peers appointed by the author's institution (e.g. a University Department)
8. Revision by the author
9. Review by 2 or 3 peers who serve as reviewers and associate editor for the journal
10. Revision by the author
11. Step 9 may be repeated if the review committee considers it necessary
12. Revision by the author
13. Review by the Journal Editor and/or Technical Editor
14. Preparation of galley proof
15. Review, correction, and approval by the author
16. Printing and publication

The list of procedures demonstrates that publishing a scientific paper represents a great deal of work. After the author has prepared the first draft of the paper, other people (those who serve as reviewers and editors) may invest as much effort in getting the paper published as the author does himself.

Each published paper becomes a part of the storehouse of information that constitutes the knowledge of a scientific discipline. The scientific community has decided that such a large input of effort is justified, so that the permanent scientific literature is technically sound, is accurate, and is readable.

Conscientious scientists are willing for the arduous work of writing and revision, because they know that published contributions to knowledge are their major evidence of accomplishment. They also learn to appreciate the help they receive from reviewers and editors. Authors must understand that publication of their papers is possible only because other people have contributed their precious time to help them.

For the system of scientific publication to function equitably, each author must be willing to reciprocate by reviewing manuscripts for other authors. It would not be fair for a scientist, as an author, to receive the benefit of the review efforts of his colleagues without accepting the responsibility of serving as a reviewer of the manuscripts of other authors.

For young scientists, the duties of reviewing manuscripts usually begins informally at step 5 (above), wherein close associates review each other's manuscripts. The responsibility becomes somewhat more formal at step 7, when he is intermittently appointed to serve on review committees by the institution for which he works. Appointment as a Reviewer or Associate Editor for a scientific journal represents a formal, ongoing commitment.

All these jobs of reviewing manuscripts are demanding and time-consuming, and reduce the time a scientist has to devote to his own immediate personal interests. Nevertheless, he must be willing to accept these responsibilities as his contribution to the ongoing process of the increase and diffusion of knowledge in his chosen field of science.

Remember:

The help of good reviewers,
We all appreciate.
Others do this job for us,
and we must reciprocate.

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