



Advice for Authors Interested in Peer Review: Editors Share Insights

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The peer review process is an essential component of any scientific journal and is dependent on peer reviewers to conduct thorough, informative, and timely reviews. The *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition* (JPGN) has been incentivizing peer reviewers by providing CME credit for conducting reviews. The journal also has a convenient checklist [available online](#) to help guide peer reviewers in assessing articles, and the checklist is useful for less experienced reviewers and those who are just beginning to get involved in the peer review process. Although the checklist is specific to JPGN, it provides valuable information for anyone considering becoming a peer reviewer for a medical journal.

The peer review process for most journals, including JPGN, entails a formal review by experts in the same field to assure that a scholarly work meets necessary and essential standards, including ethical considerations, prior to acceptance and publication. Peer reviewers must always declare potential [conflicts of interest](#), specifically if they have published or conducted research with any of the authors within 3 years and/or if they have competitive interests with the research under consideration.

What should peer reviews contain?

Ideally, peer reviews should include a detailed critique of the manuscript and a recommendation to accept the manuscript as is (which is unusual on the initial submission), to accept with minor or major revision, or to reject the submission. The editor and the editor-in-chief also review the manuscript, taking into account the comments and suggestions of the peer reviewers, then formulate a final decision that is transmitted to the authors. Occasionally the editors may opt to request additional peer reviewers, possibly to obtain expert opinion on biostatistical methods or another area, particularly when opinions from the initial reviewers are conflicting or confusing. Ultimately, the goal is to provide meaningful and timely feedback to the authors to help improve their manuscript (whether accepted or not) and to maintain high standards for the journal.

JPGN has updated the suggested guidelines for peer reviewers to provide appropriate and useful feedback to the authors and assist the editors in determining the outcome of the submission. The following points are recommended to be addressed by all peer reviewers to help with the editorial process:

- Is there a hypothesis?
- Are the methods used the best ones to answer the hypothesis?
- Are the data clearly presented and analyzed correctly?
- Does a statistician need to review this manuscript?

- Are the conclusions supported by the results?
- Is the discussion succinct? Does it explain the results in relationship to the current literature?
- Are all the tables and figures useful and understandable?
- Does the abstract reflect the manuscript correctly?
- Does the information in the *What's known/What's new* section reflect the manuscript correctly?
- Can you see yourself or your colleagues citing this article in your own writing on a similar subject?

These points are also helpful for authors to consider as they formulate their manuscripts for submission and then for resubmission in responding to the peer reviewers' critiques.

Resubmissions

For resubmitted manuscripts, peer reviewers who have previously reviewed a manuscript become essential in the peer review process—editors usually only request the same peer reviewers to provide feedback on resubmitted manuscripts. This is extremely important to keep the peer review process moving forward smoothly and quickly. Having to involve a new peer reviewer is often upsetting to the authors who may have to respond to a new set of queries. JPGN currently has a response rate of over 80% for peer re-reviews for resubmitted manuscripts; we are aiming for 100%.

Related articles

1. Peer Review Essentials for the Beginning Peer Reviewer. <https://publons.com/blog/peer-review-essentials-for-the-beginning-peer>
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3. How to Submit a Revision and Tips on Being a Good Peer Reviewer. <http://wkauthorservices.editage.com/resources/author-resource-review/Dec-2015.html>
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