



How to Submit a Revision and Tips on Being a Good Peer Reviewer

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The manuscript that you have worked long and hard on has been submitted and rejected from publication in your top-choice journal. The majority of academic researchers—even Nobel Prize winners!—have faced this disappointment. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and you can rebound to find a new, more suitable home for your manuscript.

After receiving a notice that your manuscript has been rejected, the first step is to read the reviewers' comments. The second step is to put the reviews away for a few days to digest the critiques and avoid responding with emotion. After this time, consider the reasons why your paper was rejected. Does it have a "fatal flaw" such as a lack of importance or an inappropriate study design? If so, you may be out of luck getting it published in a peer-reviewed journal. Hopefully, the reviewers provided you with helpful comments to improve your manuscript. Whether your manuscript is revised for the same journal or submitted to a new one, you should incorporate the critiques to improve your paper. If you are able to revise and resubmit to the same journal, you need to follow the author instructions for that journal so your revision complies with journal guidelines (such as using a different color font to indicate new text). In your response to the reviewers, itemize and address each critique, indicating the specific place where the manuscript was edited. Although you may not agree with all of the reviewers' recommended changes, you still must address the comment politely and indicate why you are or are not making certain changes. Back up your argument with additional citations or analyses.

Because getting useful feedback from reviewers is critical to improving a manuscript, it is also important for authors to be good reviewers. Peer reviewers are considered to be experts in their field and thus, it is necessary to decline any reviews if the manuscript does not fit your expertise. Likewise, reviews should be declined if you cannot return the review in a timely manner or if you have a conflict of interest. Editors will frequently scan a newly submitted manuscript to determine whether it is suitable for the journal or contains a fatal flaw. If the editor finds either of these to be true, he/she will most likely reject it outright before sending it for peer review. However, upon receiving a manuscript, reviewers may wish to quickly read it to determine the quality of the study and the writing. If the quality is poor, the reviewer may only include major comments and/or request that it is rewritten before providing a full review. A short summary of the key findings and value of the manuscript is a good way to begin a review. Comments can then be itemized under major and minor points. Major comments are critical to the validity of the study, and minor comments include areas that require clarification or requests for additional data. The recommendation as to whether the paper should be

published is reserved for the editor. Reviewers ought to remember that the goal of peer review is to provide constructive feedback for the author and encourage the efforts of his/her peers. There are limitations to every study, and reviewers need to keep this in mind when assessing the work of others.

It is never easy to be rejected or to accept critical feedback. However, it is important to turn the negatives into positives for the benefit of your manuscript and for your future as a scientific writer. Likewise, providing critical feedback can be difficult because it is more time consuming than giving a flat-out rejection. Again, your own skills in scientific writing and study design can improve if you are a conscientious peer reviewer.

Dr. Chung is the outcomes section editor for the journal [*Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*](#) and is the immediate past president of the [ASPS Plastic Surgery Foundation](#).

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