

Guidelines for Reviewers

The role of the reviewer is vital in maintaining the integrity and quality of the scholarly record. Reviewers are expected to evaluate manuscripts in a timely, transparent, and ethical manner, adhering to established guidelines such as those provided by COPE (https://publicationethics.org/files/cope-ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers-v2_0.pdf). Peer review is a cornerstone of scholarly publishing, relying on the expertise and dedication of specialists to uphold high standards. We deeply appreciate the time and effort our reviewers invest in evaluating manuscripts for *Animal Reports*, as their contributions are essential to the success of the publication process.

General reviewing criteria

The journal uses a closed single-blind peer-review system (the names of the reviewers are hidden from the authors). Submitted manuscripts are reviewed by at least two experts. Reviewers are asked to recommend whether a manuscript should be accepted, revised, or rejected. Although the journal uses the plagiarism detection system CrossCheck, reviewers should alert the editors if they suspect any issues relation to author misconduct such as plagiarism.

Reviewers are asked to provide detailed, constructive comments that will help both the editors make a decision on the publication and the authors to improve their manuscript. They should point out whether the work has serious flaws that preclude its publication, or whether additional experiments should be carried out or additional data should be collected to support the conclusions drawn.

Reviewers invited by the editors of the journal should reveal any potential conflict of interest they may have with respect to the manuscript or the authors. All lively personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest should be considered.

Reviewers' criteria:

Reviewers should meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Hold no conflicts of interest with any of the authors.
- ✓ Should not come from the same institution as the authors.
- ✓ Should not have published together with the authors in the last three years.
- ✓ Hold a PhD or be MD (applicable for medical research/journals).
- ✓ Have relevant experience and have a proven publication record in the field of the submitted paper (Scopus, ORCID).
- ✓ Are experienced scholars in the field of the submitted paper.
- ✓ Hold an official and recognized academic affiliation.

Reviewers who accept to review a manuscript are expected to:

- ✓ Possess the requisite expertise to critically evaluate the scientific rigor and

quality of the manuscript.

- ✓ Deliver thorough and constructive review reports while ensuring prompt and consistent engagement throughout the peer review process.
- ✓ Uphold the highest standards of professionalism and adhere to ethical guidelines in all aspects of manuscript evaluation.

Reviewers' Conflicts of Interest disclosure

The reviewers ask to declare any potential conflicts of interest and email the journal Editorial Office if they are unsure if something constitutes a potential conflict of interest. Possible conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to):

- ✓ Reviewer works in the same institute as one of the authors.
- ✓ Reviewer is a co-author, collaborator, joint grant holder, or has any other academic link, with any of the authors within the past three years.
- ✓ Reviewer has a close personal relationship, rivalry or antipathy to any of the authors.
- ✓ Reviewer may in any way gain or lose financially from publication of the paper;
- ✓ Reviewer has any other non-financial conflicts of interest (political, personal, religious, ideological, academic, intellectual, commercial or any other) with any of the authors.
- ✓ Others (Reported)

If the reviewers should disclose any conflicts of interest, which may be perceived as bias for/ or against the paper or authors. If the reviewers detect any conflicts of interest after accepting the invitation manuscript and make a precheck, he must decline the invitation by emailing the editorial office and confidentiality handle invitation content.

Invitation to Review

The reviewers are suggested by the academic editor during the preliminary check or selected from the journal database based on the MS specialty. Reviewers are asked to evaluate the quality of the manuscript and to provide a comprehensive recommendation to the editor on whether a manuscript should be accepted, requires revisions (Major or minor), or should be rejected.

The invited reviewers ask to:

- ✓ Accept or decline (with suggest alternative reviewers) any invitations as soon as possible (based on the manuscript title and abstract).
- ✓ Request a deadline extension as soon as possible in case more time is required to provide a comprehensive report. The expected review time is **10 days**.

Specific reviewing criteria

Review Reports should:

The review report must be prepared in clear English. We have listed some general instructions regarding the review report for your consideration below. To begin with, please consider the following guidelines:

- ✓ Read the whole article as well as the supplementary material, if there is any, paying close attention to the figures, tables, data, and methods.
- ✓ Your report should critically analyze the article as a whole but also specific sections and the key concepts presented in the article.
- ✓ Please ensure your comments are detailed so that the authors may correctly understand and address the points you raise.
- ✓ Please maintain a neutral tone and focus on providing constructive criticism that will help the authors improve their work. Derogatory comments will not be tolerated.
- ✓ Review reports should contain a brief summary (one short paragraph) outlining the aim of the paper, its main contributions and strengths.
- ✓ Review reports should contain general concept comments:
 - **Article:** highlighting areas of weakness, the testability of the hypothesis, methodological inaccuracies, missing controls, etc.
 - **Review:** commenting on the completeness of the review topic covered, the relevance of the review topic, the gap in knowledge identified, the appropriateness of references, etc. These comments are focused on the scientific content of the manuscript and should be specific enough for the authors to be able to respond.
- ✓ Specific comments referring to line numbers, tables or figures that point out inaccuracies within the text or sentences that are unclear. These comments should also focus on the scientific content and not on spelling, formatting or English language problems, as these can be addressed at a later stage by our internal staff.

Review Reports should not:

- ✓ Reviewers must not recommend citation of work by themselves, close colleagues, another author, or the journal when it is not clearly necessary to improve the quality of the manuscript under review.
- ✓ Reviewers must not recommend excessive citation of their work (self-citations), another author's work (honorary citations) or articles from the journal where the manuscript was submitted as a means of increasing the citations of the reviewer/authors/journal. You can provide references as needed, but they must clearly improve the quality of the manuscript under

review.

- ✓ GenAI tools and other large language models (LLMs) should not be used by reviewers in the preparation of review reports. Reviewers are solely responsible for the content of their reports and the utilization of these tools may violate confidentiality, proprietary, and data privacy rights. Some limited use to improve the written quality of the peer-review report, such as checking grammar, structure, spelling, punctuation, and formatting, may be acceptable, but should be disclosed upon submission of the peer-review report.
- ✓ Reviewers should not upload manuscripts under any circumstances, either in whole or in part; images; figures; tables; or any kind of communication related to manuscripts under review to any GenAI tools. If it is determined that AI tools have been inappropriately used in review report preparation, the report will be discarded.
- **General questions to help guide your review report for research articles:**
 - ✓ Is the manuscript clear, relevant for the field and presented in a well-structured manner?
 - ✓ Are the cited references mostly recent publications (within the last 5 years) and relevant? Does it include an excessive number of self-citations?
 - ✓ Is the manuscript scientifically sound and is the experimental design appropriate to test the hypothesis?
 - ✓ Are the manuscript's results reproducible based on the details given in the methods section?
 - ✓ Are the figures/tables/images/schemes appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand? Is the data interpreted appropriately and consistently throughout the manuscript? Please include details regarding the statistical analysis or data acquired from specific databases.
 - ✓ Are the conclusions consistent with the evidence and arguments presented?
 - ✓ Please evaluate the ethics statements and data availability statements to ensure they are adequate.
- **General questions to help guide your review report for review articles:**
 - ✓ Is the review clear, comprehensive and of relevance to the field? Is a gap in knowledge identified?
 - ✓ Was a similar review published recently and, if yes, is this current review still relevant and of interest to the scientific community?
 - ✓ Are the statements and conclusions drawn coherent and supported by the

listed citations?

- ✓ Are the figures/tables/images/schemes appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand? Did it have enough resolution to be print without any mistakes.
- ✓ Are the cited references mostly recent publications (within the last 5 years) and relevant? Are any relevant citations omitted? Does it include an excessive number of self-citations?
- ✓ If the reviewer becomes aware of any *scientific misconduct* or *fraud*, *plagiarism* or any other unethical behavior related to the manuscript, they should raise these concerns to the editor immediately.

Rating the Manuscript

The manuscript must also be rated numerically (0-5) to facilitate the editorial judgment on the general quality, please rate the following aspects:

- ✓ **Scope:** Does the work fit the journal scope? (Please see the Aims and Scope of the journal.)
- ✓ **Novelty:** Is the question original and well-defined? Do the results provide an advancement of the current knowledge?
- ✓ **Significance:** Are the results interpreted appropriately? Are they significant? Are all conclusions justified and supported by the results? Are hypotheses carefully identified as such?
- ✓ **Quality:** Is the article written in an appropriate way? Are the data and analyses presented appropriately? Are the highest standards for presentation of the results used?
- ✓ **Scientific Soundness:** Is the study correctly designed and technically sound? Are the analyses performed with the highest technical standards? Is the data robust enough to draw conclusions? Are the methods, tools, software, and reagents described with sufficient details to allow another researcher to reproduce the results? Is the raw data available and correct (where applicable)?
- ✓ **Interest to the Readers:** Are the conclusions interesting for the readership of the journal? Will the paper attract a wide readership, or be of interest only to a limited number of people?
- ✓ **Overall Merit:** Is there an overall benefit to publishing this work? Does the work advance the current knowledge? Do the authors address an important long-standing question with smart experiments? Do the authors present a negative result of a valid scientific hypothesis?
- ✓ **English level:** Is the English language appropriate and understandable?

Final Recommendation

Please provide an overall recommendation for the next processing stage of the manuscript as follows:

1. **Accept in current Form:** The paper can be accepted without any further changes.
2. **Minor corrections:** The paper can in principle be accepted after revision based on the reviewer's comments. Authors are given five days for minor revisions.
3. **Major corrections:** The acceptance of the manuscript would depend on the revisions. The author needs to provide a point-by-point response or provide a rebuttal if some of the reviewer's comments cannot be revised. A maximum of two rounds of major revision per manuscript is normally provided. Authors will be asked to resubmit the revised paper within ten days and the revised version will be returned to the reviewer for further comments.
4. **Reject:** The article has serious flaws, makes no original contribution, and the paper may be rejected with no offer of resubmission to the journal.

Our editors are not involved in making decisions about papers which:

- they have written themselves.
- have been written by family members or colleagues.
- relate to products or services in which they have an interest.

Confidentiality

Reviewers are asked not to distribute copies of the manuscript or use results contained in it without the authors' permission. However, they are free to show it to knowledgeable colleagues and consult them about the review. Suggestions for alternative reviewers are helpful to the Editors and would be appreciated.

Technicalities

We ask reviewers to return their reports within the specified deadline or inform the Editor as soon as possible if they are not able to do so. Reviewer reports can be submitted via online submission system.

Special issues and article collections

The peer review process for special issues and article collections follows the same process as outlined above for regular submissions, except, a guest editor may send the submissions out to the reviewers and may recommend a decision to the journal editor. The journal editor oversees the peer review process of all special issues and article collections to ensure the high standards of publishing ethics and

Royal Academic Press Guidelines

responsiveness are respected and is responsible for the final decision regarding acceptance or rejection of articles.

Open access

The Animal Reports Journal is open access (CC BY).