



## BASIC PRINCIPLES TO WHICH REVIEWERS OF ARTICLES SHOULD ADHERE

The following summary of guidelines for conducting a review is provided for reviewers of articles. It is **strongly** recommended that reviewers read the complete information given in the “Ethical Guidelines for peer review” provided by the Committee on Publications Ethics (COPE)<sup>1</sup> and in the Ten Simple Rules for Reviewers published by Bourne, P.E., Korngreen<sup>2</sup>.

**“Respect the confidentiality** of peer review and do not reveal any details of the manuscript or its review during or after the peer review process beyond those that are released by the Journal”<sup>1</sup>. Many of us have received reviews where it is fairly obvious who reviewed the work. It is hard to maintain anonymity in small scientific communities, and you should reread your review to be sure (*that*) it does not endanger the anonymity. Do not share the manuscript with colleagues unless the Editor has given the green light”<sup>2</sup>. If the identity of the author(s) has been inadvertently discovered, the reviewer should refrain from discussing the review with the author(s) at the time of the review AND at the time of publication. Other detailed instructions for ensuring a blind review can be seen under the “Instructions to authors”. If the identity of the author(s) has been inadvertently discovered, the reviewer should refrain from discussing the review with the author(s) at the time of the review AND after publication.

**“Do not use information obtained during the peer-review process** for your own or any other person’s or organisation’s advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others”<sup>1</sup>. You must contact the editor before communicating with anybody else regarding the paper under review.

“You should **declare all potential conflicting interests**, seeking advice from the journal if you are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest”<sup>1</sup>. “....The cloak of anonymity is not intended to cover scientific misconduct. Do not take on the review if there is the slightest possibility of conflict of interest. Conflicts arise when, for example, the paper is poor and will likely be rejected, yet there might be good ideas that you could apply in your own research, or, someone is working dangerously close to your own next paper. ...“With conflict, there is often a gray area; if you are in any doubt whatsoever, consult with the Editors who have asked you to review”<sup>2</sup>.

**“Do Not Accept a Review Assignment** unless you can accomplish the task in the requested time frame—Learn to Say No”<sup>2</sup>. “Late reviews are not fair to the authors, nor are they fair to journal staff. Think about this next time you have a paper under review and the reviewers are unresponsive. You do not like delays when it is your paper, neither do the authors of the paper you are reviewing. Moreover, a significant part of the cost of publishing is associated with chasing reviewers for overdue reviews. No one benefits from this process”<sup>2</sup>.

**Write Reviews You Would Be Satisfied with as an Author** “Terse, ill-informed reviews reflect badly on ....(the journal). Support your criticisms or praise with concrete reasons that are well laid out and logical”<sup>2</sup>.

**“Be objective and constructive in (your) review**, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libellous or derogatory personal comments”<sup>1</sup>. A poorly written review is as bad as a poorly written paper. ....Try to be sure the editors and the authors can understand the points you are making. A point-by-point critique is valuable since it is easy to read and to respond to. For each point, indicate how critical it is to your accepting the paper. The form provided on the website will assist here. “...Give the Editors a clear answer as to your recommendation for publication”. Reviewers must select an option (ie Accept submission,

Revisions required, Re-submit for review, Re submit elsewhere, Decline submission, See comments) on the SAJOT web site to enable the review process to be completed. Should you choose the option “Revisions required, the article will not be returned to you for review when it is resubmitted with the corrections.

It is recommended that reviewers also make use of the “track changes” for commenting on different aspects of the article.

Please see instructions for ensuring a blind review under the Instructions to Authors.

## REFERENCES

1. Hames I (on behalf of COPE). COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers. COPE Council, March 2013, v.1 [http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines\\_0.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines_0.pdf).
2. Bourne, P.E., Korngreen, A. Ten simple Rules for Reviewers. LPoS Comput Biol 2, (9):e110. doi:10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030110, 2006.

