

# Reviewer Guidelines for Ecology, Ecological Monographs, and Ecological Applications

Quality peer reviews are essential for ensuring the quality of scholarly journals. Your evaluation will play a major role in our decision as to whether to accept a manuscript for publication. We trust you to be prompt, fair, respectful of the rights of the authors, respectful of our obligations to the readership, and to evaluate the manuscript carefully and in depth. At the same time, on behalf of the ESA membership, we are very grateful for the time and effort you invest in the review process.

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## Confidentiality

Each manuscript is a privileged communication. Please do not show any manuscript to, or discuss a manuscript with, anyone else, except to solicit assistance with a technical point. If you feel a colleague is more qualified than you to review the manuscript, do not pass the manuscript on to that person without first requesting permission from the journal's editorial staff ([esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org)) to do so. Your review and your recommendation should also be considered confidential.

## Mentorship (Joint Review)

If you have one or more graduate students or postdocs who could benefit from being involved in the review process, we strongly encourage you to send a request to the journal's editorial staff ([esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org)) with the name and email address of the person. Staff can add the mentee as a reviewer and you can work together on a joint review. In most cases this arrangement is beneficial both as a review and as an opportunity to provide valuable training for the next generation of reviewers and potential authors.

All participants in a joint review can submit the same review and get credit in our database and annual list of reviewers.

It is very important that each reviewer submit a copy of the review, even if the others involved in the joint review have already done so. The system will not send the manuscript to Subject Matter Editor for a final decision until all reviews are in. It is a common issue with joint reviews to have one member not submit a review and this can delay a manuscript for several weeks. Once you have accepted the invitation, please let us know so we can make sure your due date is synced with any other joint reviewers. We do not require the participants in a joint review to submit identical reviews, even though this is the most common situation.

## Conflicts of Interest

If you feel you might have difficulty writing an objective review, please alert the journal's editorial staff ([esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org)) immediately. If your previous or present connection with the author(s) or an author's institution might be construed as creating a conflict of interest, but no actual conflict exists, please discuss this issue in your confidential comments to the editor. If in doubt, please contact the journal's editorial staff at [esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org).

## Open Research Policy

ESA has adopted a society-wide Open Research Policy for its publications to further support scientific exploration and preservation, allow a full assessment of published research, and streamline policies across our family of journals.

As a reviewer, we do not expect you to perform the task of making sure an author follows all parts of the Open Research Policy, nor fully examine any linked data in detail, but please keep in mind the following points during your review:

- Has the author provided all novel code as supporting information? Authors are required to submit any novel code with their manuscript at the time of submission. If you find a manuscript is missing novel code, please include this in your review.
- Are there discrepancies within the manuscript regarding the presentation of data (i.e., will the proposed data statement on the title page provide all necessary underlying data, or should additional material be supplied?)

## Fairness and objectivity

If the research reported in this manuscript is flawed, criticize the science, not the scientist. Harsh words in a review will cause the reader to doubt your objectivity. In this situation, your criticisms will be rejected, even if they are correct. Comments directed to the author should convince the author that:

- (1) You have read the entire manuscript carefully.
- (2) Your criticisms are objective and correct, are not merely differences of opinion, and are intended to help the author improve his or her manuscript.
- (3) You are qualified to provide an expert opinion about the research reported in this manuscript.

If you fail to win the author's respect and appreciation, much of your effort will have been wasted.

## Anonymity

You may sign your review if you wish. If you choose to remain anonymous, avoid comments to the authors that might serve as clues to your identity and be careful about annotating the manuscript. Unless you indicate otherwise (such as by signing your remarks for the authors), we will assume you wish to remain anonymous.

## Comments for the Author

Identify the major contributions of the manuscript. What are its major strengths and weaknesses and is it suitable for publication? Please include both general and specific comments with regards to these questions and **emphasize your most significant points**.

### General Comments

*General Comments should address the following:*

- Importance and interest to this journal's readers
- Scientific soundness
- Originality
- Degree to which conclusions are supported
- Organization and clarity
- Cohesiveness of argument
- Length relative to information content
- Whether material should be moved to the digital appendices
- Conciseness and writing style
- Appropriateness for the targeted journal and specific section of the journal

### Specific Comments

Support your general comments, positive or negative, with specific evidence. Remember that a review lacking substance will generally have less impact than a review that is well-reasoned and rich in content. You may embed comments in the manuscript, but please summarize your remarks in "Comments for the Author(s)." Your comments should address any of the following categories that significantly affected your judgment of the manuscript:

**1. Presentation**

- a. Does the manuscript tell a cohesive story?
- b. Is a tightly reasoned argument evident throughout the manuscript?
- c. Where does the manuscript wander from this argument?
- d. Do the title, abstract, key words, introduction, and conclusions accurately and consistently reflect the major point(s) of the manuscript?
- e. Is the writing concise, easy to follow, and interesting?

**2. Length**

- a. What portions of the manuscript should be expanded, condensed, combined, or deleted?
- b. Please do not advise an overall shortening by X%. Be specific!

**3. Methods**

- a. Are the methods appropriate, current, and described clearly enough that the work could be repeated by someone else?

**4. Data and/or code presentation**

- a. When results are stated in the body of the manuscript, can you easily verify them by examining tables and figures?
- b. Are any of the results counterintuitive?
- c. Are all tables and figures necessary, clearly labeled, well planned, and readily interpretable?
- d. If the author has provided data, is this data presented in a way that allows a reader to replicate the results?
- e. Has the author provided novel code that is required to replicate their analyses?

**5. Statistical design and analyses**

- a. Are they appropriate and correct?
- b. Can the reader readily discern which measurements/observations are independent of other measurements/observations?
- c. Are replicates correctly identified?
- d. Are significance statements justified?

**6. Errors**

- a. Point out any errors in technique, fact, calculation, interpretation, or style.
- b. We follow the ASTM Standard E380- 93, "Standard Practice for Use of the International System of Units.

**7. Citations**

- a. Are all pertinent references cited?
- b. Are any citations irrelevant to the manuscript?
- c. Are citations provided for all assertions of fact not supported by the data in this manuscript?

**8. Overlap**

- a. Does this manuscript report data or conclusions that are already published or in press? If so, please provide details.

## FAQ

### **Q: How do I know my review has been submitted?**

When your review has been successfully submitted, you will be taken to a new page and will find a message at the top of the screen that confirms your review was received. You will also receive an automatically generated email message on behalf of the Subject-matter Editor confirming receipt.

### **Q: I'm trying to submit my review, but I can't proceed. What's going on?**

If you have filled in the review form, but you cannot proceed, it is likely that you missed a required field in the review form. Required fields are marked by a red "\*". Please check the form to see if there are any fields you missed. If you have checked the form and you still cannot proceed, please create a PDF copy of your review (for reference) and contact the journal's editorial staff at [esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org).

### **Q: Who should I contact about a possible conflict of interest?**

If you are unsure about whether you have a conflict of interest, either before or after accepting an invitation, please contact the journal's editorial staff at [esajournals@esa.org](mailto:esajournals@esa.org).

### **Q: How do I upload a file that only the Editor will see?**

When you upload a file into the form, you can select "For Editor Only" to ensure the file will only be seen by the Editor and the journal's editorial staff and will not be forwarded to the author.