

PLOS Academic Editor Guide



Applies to:

[PLOS Complex Systems](#) | [PLOS Computational Biology](#) | [PLOS Digital Health](#) | [PLOS Genetics](#) | [PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases](#) | [PLOS Pathogens](#) | [PLOS Sustainability and Transformation](#)

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ACADEMIC EDITOR ROLE

Academic Editors oversee the peer review process from beginning to end, taking responsibility for conducting an assessment based on the publication criteria, finding and inviting reviewers, evaluating their feedback, making editorial decisions, and communicating decisions to the Section Editor. Academic Editors play an active role in the community, and are highly engaged as representatives of the journal.

To ensure an efficient peer review process for our authors, our Academic Editors strive to:

- Agree to handle one to two new manuscript assignments per month
- Handle each manuscript assignment from first assessment to final decision
- Respond to manuscript invitations (Accept or Decline) within two days
- Assess whether the manuscript is suitable for peer review within four days of agreeing to the invitation
- Secure two or more reviewers on manuscripts that are suitable for review
- Submit a decision within four days of receipt of the complete reviews
- Adhere to editorial best practices

Our staff is always available to provide assistance and guidance on editorial policies, so please email the journal with any questions.

Ambassadorship

Our editors are PLOS ambassadors who are empowered to use their expertise to spread awareness of our [mission](#) and [values](#) in the global research community, forge inclusive relationships, guide and encourage a diverse group of prospective and current contributors, reflect community needs, and increase goodwill.

Code of Conduct

In addition to these role expectations, all editors adhere to PLOS's [Code of Conduct](#) for Editorial Board Members.



Navigating Editorial Manager: Getting Started

Login

- Log in to Editorial Manager:

[PLOS Complex Systems](#) | [PLOS Computational Biology](#) | [PLOS Digital Health](#) | [PLOS Genetics](#) | [PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases](#) | [PLOS Pathogens](#) | [PLOS Sustainability and Transformation](#)

When you joined the Editorial Board, the Editorial Board Services team set up your profile with Editor permissions.

- Enter your Username and Password and click **Editor Login** to access your editor main menu.

Please Enter the Following [Insert Special Character](#)

Username:

Password:

[Author Login](#) [Reviewer Login](#) [Editor Login](#) [Publisher Login](#)

Or Login via: [What is ORCID?](#)

[Send Login Details](#) [Register Now](#) [Login Help](#)

*If you log into EM as a reviewer or author, you can change your role to Academic Editor using the **Role** drop down menu after clicking on your name in the top navigation bar.*

Username

Role

Academic Editor

Author

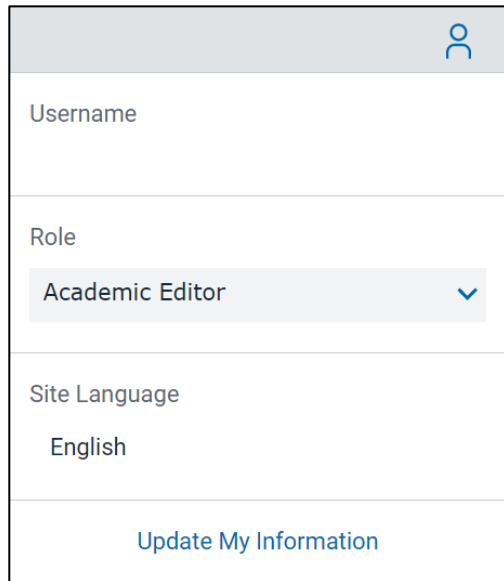
Reviewer

Academic Editor

Indicate Your Areas of Expertise

This step is critical to help match submissions to your areas of expertise. **Personal Classifications** and **Personal Keywords** help guide invitations.

- Click on your name in the top navigation bar then **Update My Information**



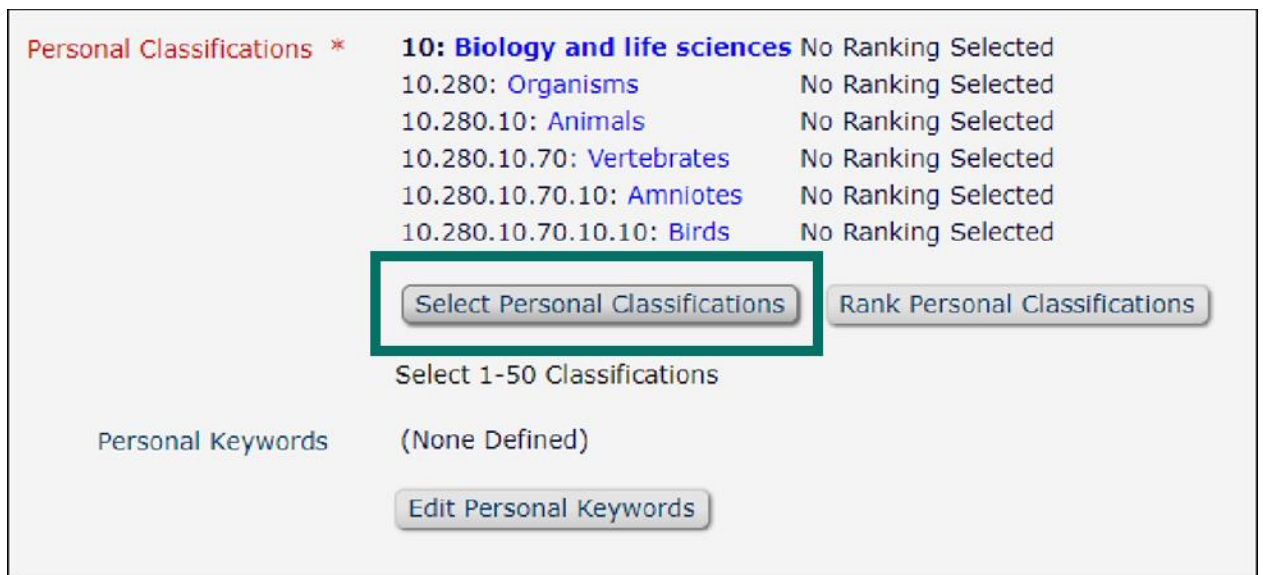
Username

Role
Academic Editor

Site Language
English

[Update My Information](#)

- Navigate to **Areas of Interest or Expertise** and indicate your areas of expertise using **Personal Classifications** and **Personal Keywords**.
- Click **Select Personal Classifications**.



Personal Classifications *

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 10: Biology and life sciences | No Ranking Selected |
| 10.280: Organisms | No Ranking Selected |
| 10.280.10: Animals | No Ranking Selected |
| 10.280.10.70: Vertebrates | No Ranking Selected |
| 10.280.10.70.10: Amniotes | No Ranking Selected |
| 10.280.10.70.10.10: Birds | No Ranking Selected |

[Select Personal Classifications](#) [Rank Personal Classifications](#)

Select 1-50 Classifications

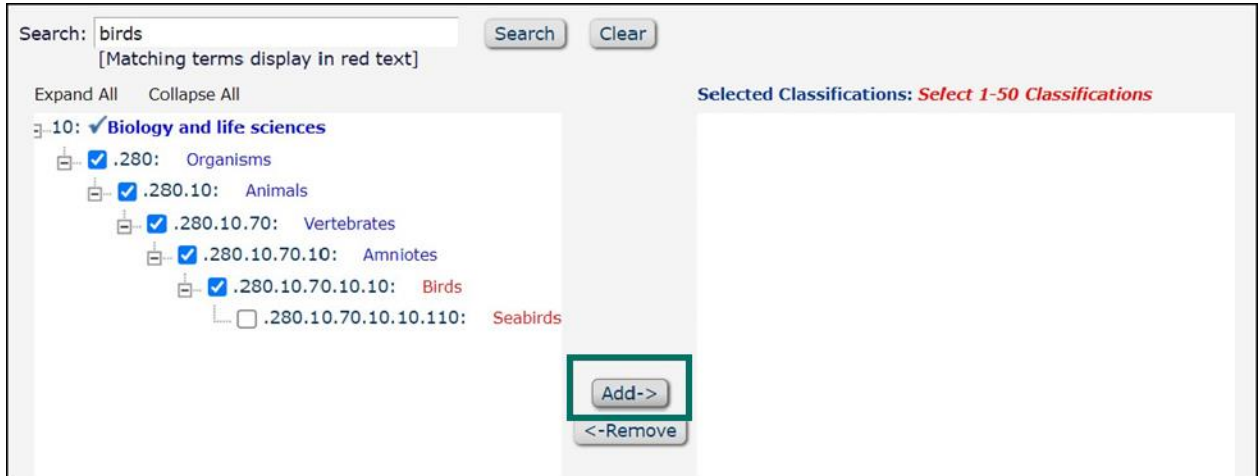
Personal Keywords (None Defined)

[Edit Personal Keywords](#)

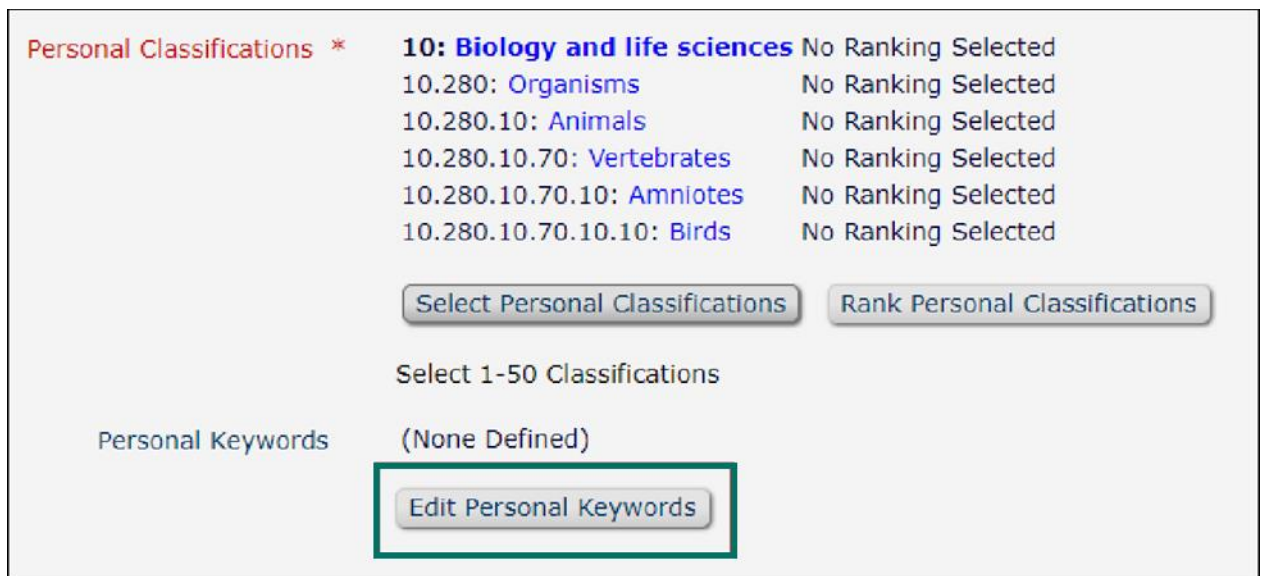
- This will ask you to select terms from a pre-defined taxonomy. You can browse the taxonomy or use [Back to Contents](#) | Page 4

the search bar to find and select available terms.

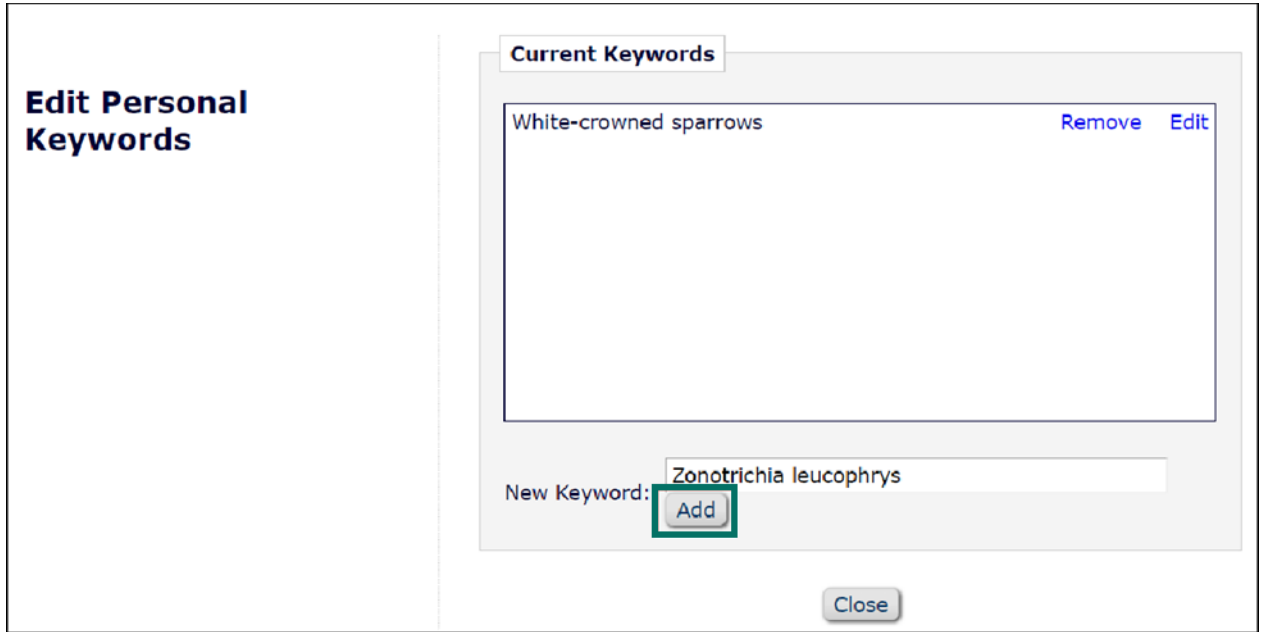
- When you've found your term, select it and click **Add ->** to add it to your Selected Classifications. This will also select and add the higher-level terms above them.



- You must click **Submit** to save changes.
- If a term is not available in the **Classifications**, you can add free text **Personal Keywords** by clicking the **Edit Personal Keywords** button.



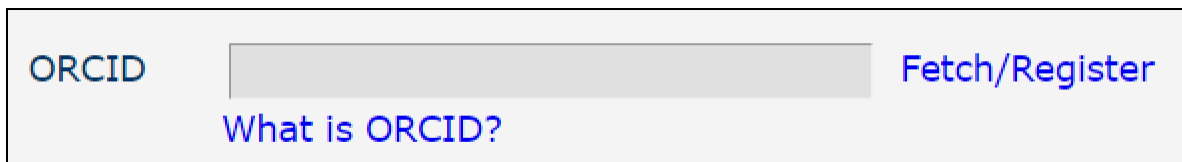
- Type free text into the **New Keyword** box then click Add.



- These terms save as they are added so you can close the window as normal when you are done.

ORCID

In the **Personal Information** section you can link your ORCID to your Editorial Manager account. Clicking **Fetch/Register** will open a new window where you can login to ORCID and authorize.



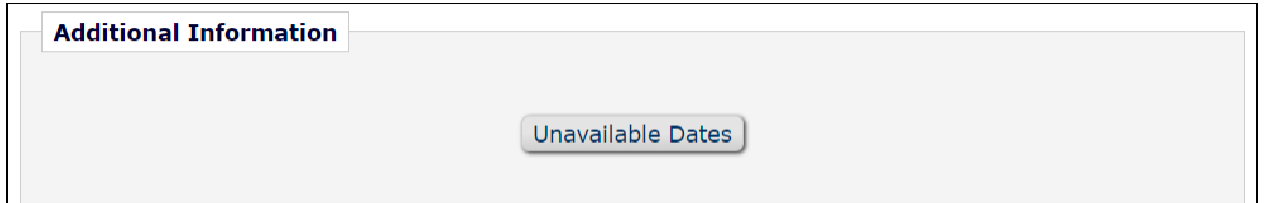
Personal and Institution Related Information

You can update your personal information at any time. Required fields are in red text and have an asterisk next to the label. You must click **Submit** at the bottom of the page to save changes.

Unavailable Dates

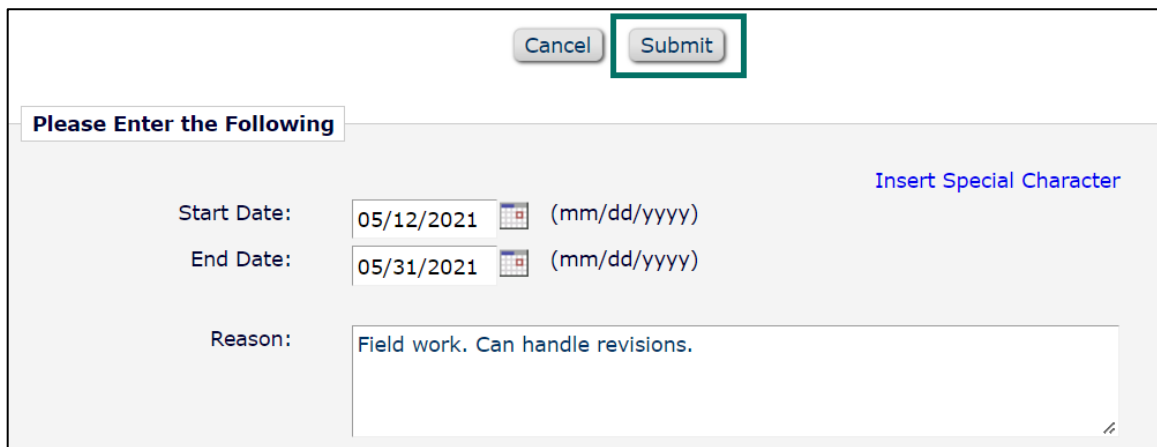
In the **Additional Information** section at the bottom of the page you have the option to select **Unavailable Dates**. Use these when you will be away, very busy, or otherwise unavailable to accept new invitations. Please indicate if you are available to handle the revised submissions you have already been working on.

- Click **Unavailable Dates**.



A screenshot of a web form. At the top left, there is a tab labeled "Additional Information". In the center of the form area, there is a button labeled "Unavailable Dates".

- Click **Add New Unavailable Date**.
- Add in a **Start Date**, **End Date**, and **Reason**, specifying whether you can handle revisions of your current assignments. You must click **Submit** to save changes. You do not have to enter any substitutes.



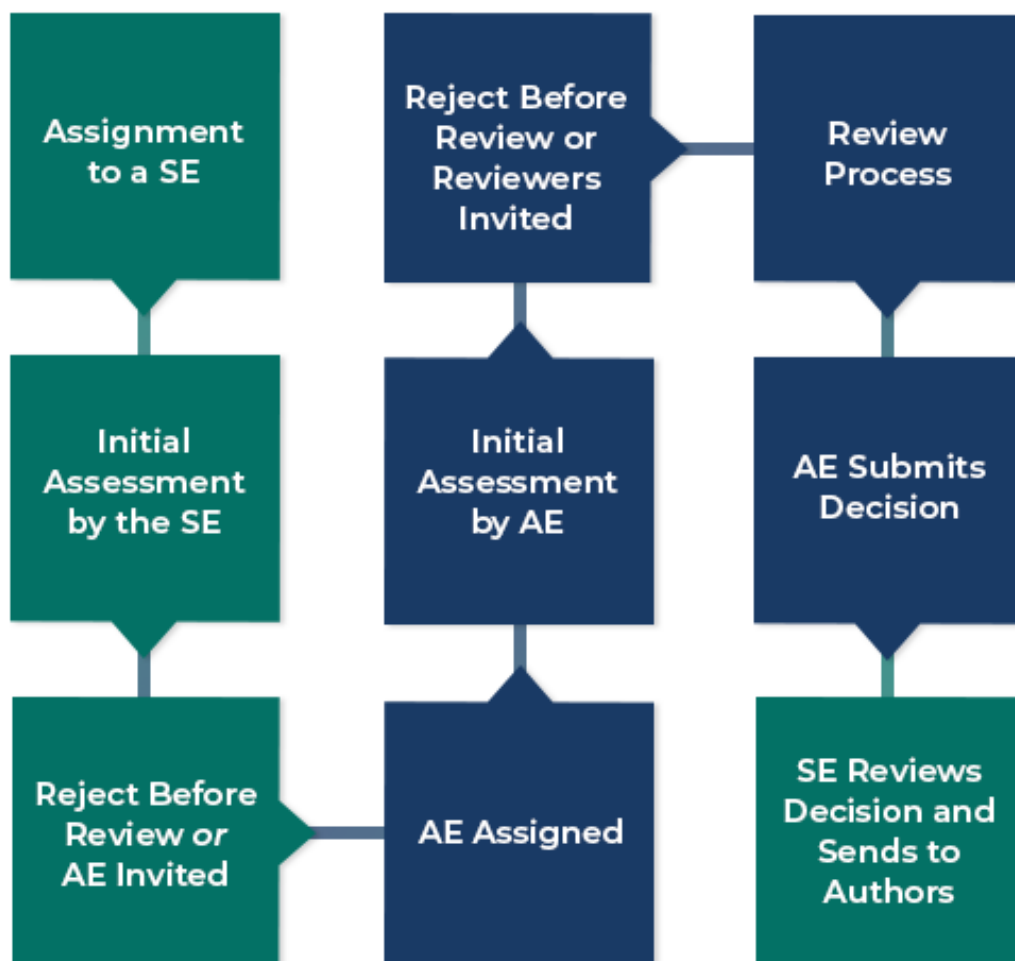
A screenshot of a form titled "Please Enter the Following". At the top right, there are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Submit", with the "Submit" button highlighted by a green box. The form contains the following fields:



- Start Date: 05/12/2021 (mm/dd/yyyy)
- End Date: 05/31/2021 (mm/dd/yyyy)
- Reason: Field work. Can handle revisions.

There is also a link "Insert Special Character" on the right side of the form.



THE EDITORIAL PROCESS



-  - Section Editors
-  - Academic Editors



Section Editor Initial Assessment

The PLOS journal team assigns papers direct to Section Editors (SEs) who then conduct an initial assessment and decide whether to reject without review or invite an Academic Editor.



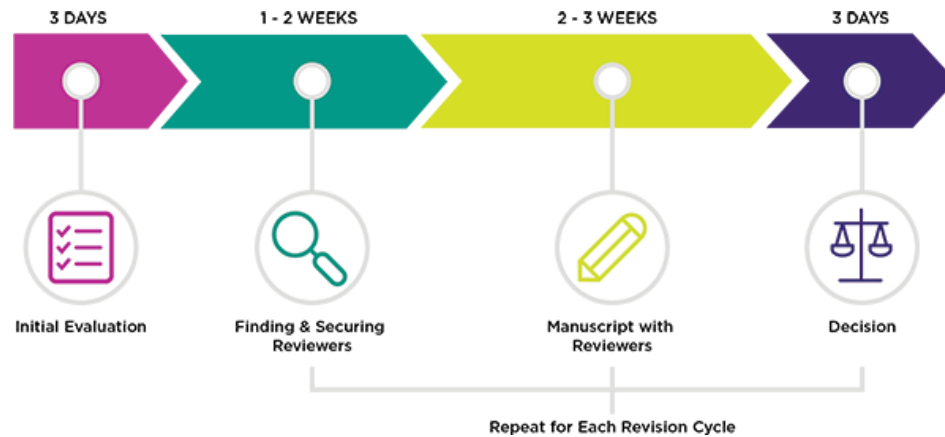
Invitations to Handle Manuscripts

Invitations to handle manuscripts are sent to you by email. Please ensure emails from **@plos.org** or **em@editorialmanager.com** are not marked as spam.

- When you receive an invitation from a Section Editor you can use the links in the email invitation to **Accept** or **Decline** the invitation
 - Clicking the links in the email will navigate you to Editorial Manager where you can either take action on a paper you've agreed to handle or enter a decline reason
 - In your decline reason we would appreciate if you could suggest a potential alternative AE or Guest Editor ("GE" – someone you would consider suitable to handle the manuscript but who is not already a member of the Editorial Board.)

- If you would like to discuss the manuscript with the SE before responding to the invitation (e.g. for potential competing interest or with general comments), please [open a discussion](#) with them or [email the journal office](#).

Below is a typical peer review timeline and guidance to help you decide whether to accept or decline an invitation.

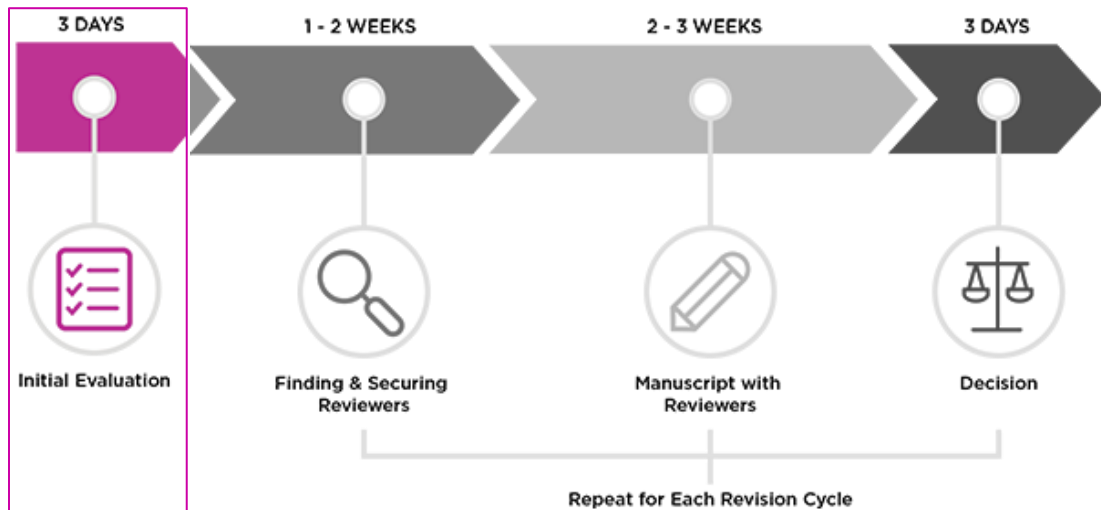


| ✓ Consider accepting an invitation when... | ✗ Consider declining an invitation when... |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You have time to handle the submission all the way through to a final decision ✓ It is in your area of expertise ✓ You have no competing interests ✓ It is not suitable for peer review* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ You are too busy, either with external commitments or with other PLOS assignments ✗ It is outside your area of expertise ✗ You have a real or perceived competing interest |

* If you feel a manuscript is in your area of expertise and you have the time, but is not suitable to send out for peer review, we ask that you accept the invitation and issue a reject decision clearly articulating your reasoning. This helps the authors receive swift feedback and decide on the next steps for their manuscript.

Initial Assessment by AE

Initial Assessment



- After you agree to handle a manuscript, conduct an initial evaluation to decide whether the manuscript represents sound science, is relevant to the community, and fits within the [scope and publication criteria](#).
- The journal office conducts internal checks for policy compliance for each submission, including data availability, ethics requirements, copyright, and more. If you notice serious issues, please contact the journal office or open a [Discussion](#) with the Section Editor.



A note on formatting: we offer 'format-free' initial submission but will follow up throughout the review process for formatting requirements.

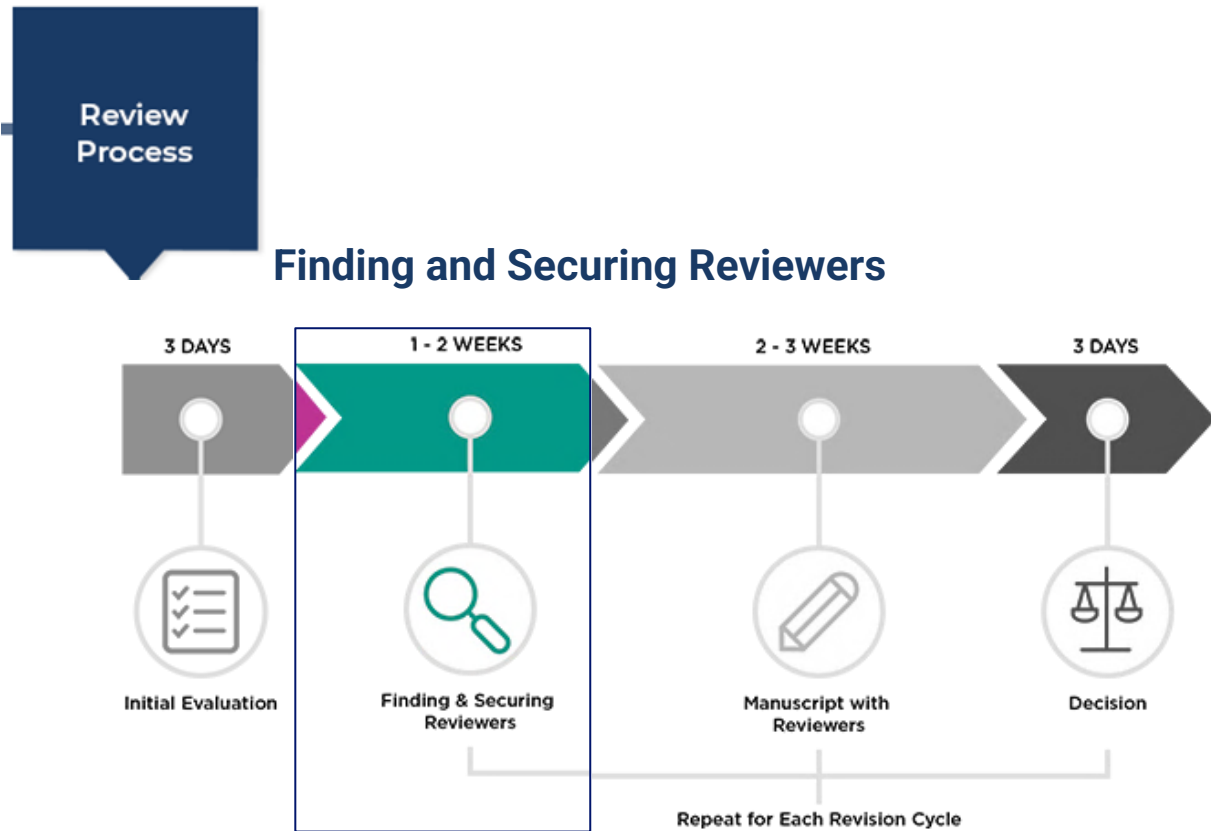
A

Reject Before Review or Reviewers Invited

At this stage you may:

- Issue a Reject and Transfer or Reject decision

- Be sure to edit the template [decision letter](#) with your justification.
 - If you choose to reject without review, the decision is passed to the SE for review prior to going to the authors.
- Send the manuscript out for peer review



Suitable Reviewers

Suitable reviewers are those who can provide a qualified and unbiased assessment of the scientific rigor of the manuscript. Please ensure that you invite a reviewer or combination of reviewers that encompass the necessary expertise on both the topic and methods reported in the submission or, if necessary, thoroughly assess this yourself. We recommend three external reviewers except in cases where the reviewers are very familiar with the subject or opinions/front matter.

Suitable Reviewer Checklist

Recommended Checks for Qualifications and Expertise

The below list provides general guidelines on what makes a suitable reviewer. See our [Additional Tips](#) below for further strategies that can help secure reviewers.

- Have published 5+ papers on the topic, preferably as corresponding or last author
- Have expertise in the research area and, if possible, also the methodology

- Are at the postdoctoral or equivalent degree level
- Are affiliated with an academic, government, not-for-profit, public/private research institution, or company

Required Checks for Competing Interests and Unbiased Perspectives

The below list are items you **must** check for before inviting a reviewer to assess a manuscript. Read more about [Editor and Reviewer competing interests](#). We recommend you avoid inviting reviewers with a competing interest unless it is necessary (for example, to review a rebuttal). If you make an exception and choose to invite a reviewer with a competing interest, they must declare their competing interest(s) on the review form.

- Do not work at the same institution as any of the authors
- Are not listed in the Opposed Reviewers section of the submission
- Have not collaborated or published with any of the author during the past 5 years
- Are not located at the same institution as another reviewer

Reviewer Invitation Tips From Editors

Generally speaking, Editorial Board members approach finding reviewers in three “stages.”

1. Researchers you know

Because they know you, it stands to reason they are more likely to accept an invitation to review. Additionally, you are familiar with their work and relevance to the paper.

2. Researchers whose work you know

These are people whose work you might know from the literature, conferences, etc. You may not know them personally, but you know their experience is on-topic for the manuscript.

3. Broader search

- The Web of Science Reviewer Locator tool can provide a list of suggested reviewers (be sure to run them through the [Suitable Reviewers Checklist](#) before inviting.)
- Using databases such as [PubMed](#), [Google Scholar](#), [Dimensions](#), and [Web of Science](#), you can find articles similar to the one you’re working on and consider inviting the corresponding and/or last author.
- You can also check out the reference list in the article; just be mindful of [competing interests](#).



Additional Tips

- Early career researchers tend to have more time and willingness to review than senior researchers.
- We encourage co-reviewing as a great way to gain peer review experience under the mentorship of an experienced reviewer. Consider inviting a more senior researcher with encouragement to co-review.
- Personalizing the invitation template can help secure reviewers.
- Setting up alternate reviewers can save you from multiple visits to EM. Alternate reviewers are automatically invited when a previous reviewer declines or doesn't respond. You can even link reviewers with similar expertise to each other. Editorial Manager will check the status of the completed/agreed reviewers before inviting your alternates. This ensures you don't end up with too many completed reviews, which can be excessive for authors, creates extra work for yourself evaluating those comments, and may overburden your colleagues and reviewer network.
- You can review the manuscript yourself but do not invite yourself in a reviewer slot. You **must** mention in the decision letter that you acted as the reviewer.
- If necessary, the journal can help with statistical reviews. Contact the [journal office](#) to facilitate.



Navigating Editorial Manager: Inviting Reviewers

On the **Invite Reviewers** page you can search for reviewers, check reviewer invitation statuses, and manage secured reviewers.

Direct Search

Use this method if you have a reviewer in mind, have found a potential reviewer on an external database, or would like to search by Personal Classifications (PLOS taxonomy) or Personal Keywords (free text).

Search by Contact Information

- On the **My Publication** tab you can search by contact information – most reliable is email

Search Type

My Publication Suggested by Author Web of Science
Reviewer Locator

Criterion Is/Is not Selector Value

Last Name is Begins With

Last Name
 First Name
 E-mail Address
 Position
 Department
 Institution
 City
 State
 Country or Region

- If your desired reviewer is in the database, their profile will appear in your search results along with some basic statistics on their past invitations and reviews. If they are not in the database you can [register them](#)
- To invite the reviewer, click the **Inv.** box. To queue a reviewer as an alternate, check the **Alt.** box.

| Inv. | Alt. | Reviewer Name | Board Member | Reviewer Statistics (Agreed Invitations) | Invitation Statistics |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | No | Reviews In Progress: 0 Completed Reviews: 4 Un-assigned After Agreeing: 0 Terminated After Agreeing: 0 Last Review Agreed: Feb 14 2015 02:54PM Last Review Completed: Mar 15 2015 09:48PM Last Review Declined: May 19 2015 08:33PM Avg Days Outstanding: 21 Manuscript Ratings: 0 Avg Review Rating: 0/5 | Date Last Invited: May 18 2021 03:17AM Outstanding Invitations: 0 Agreed: 4 Declined: 5 Un-Invited Before Agreeing: 7 Terminated: 0 Total Invitations: 11 |

Page: 1 of 1 (1 total Reviewers) Display 10 results per page.

Search by Terms

- On the **My Publication** tab you can search by Personal Classifications (PLOS taxonomy) and/or Personal Keywords (free text)
- Select your Criterion from the dropdown menu. You can add rows by clicking the **Add Search Option +** button and specify AND/OR in your search.

Criterion Is/Is not Selector Value

Personal Classifications is Contains AND

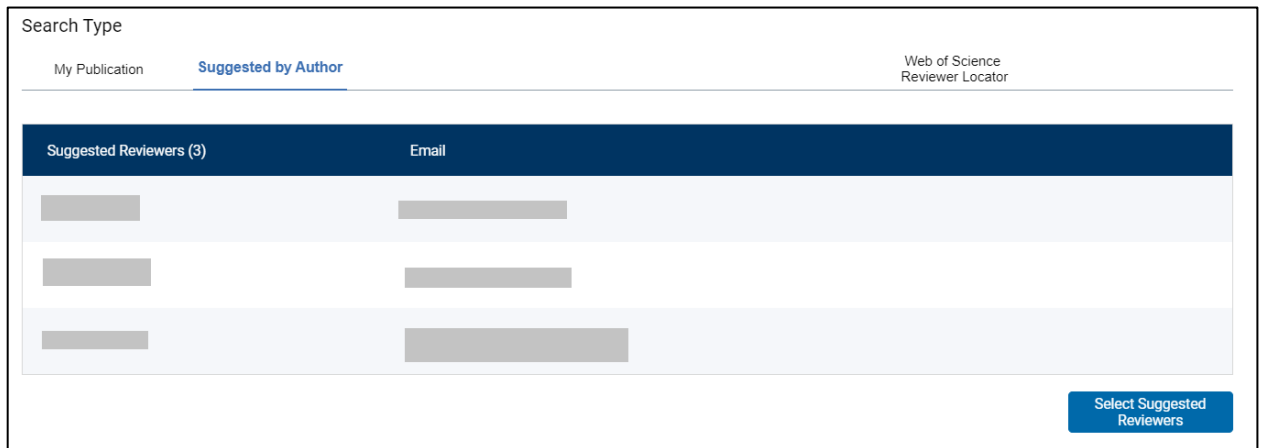
Personal Keywords is Contains

- To see a list of the manuscript's Classifications and Keywords provided by the authors, click on **Manuscript Details** in the left **Invite Reviewers Menu**

Suggested by Author

- To invite reviewers suggested by the author(s), navigate to the **Suggested by Author** tab and click **Select Suggested Reviewers**. Be sure to review all suggested reviewers and be aware of potential

conflicts of interest.

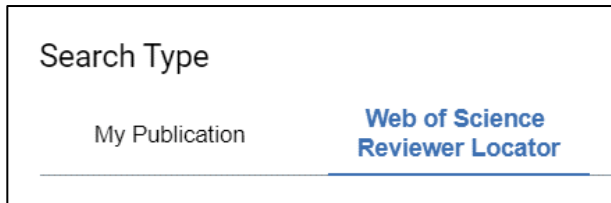


- To invite a reviewer, check the **Inv.** box. To queue a reviewer as an alternate, check the **Alt.** box.

Web of Science Reviewer Locator

The Web of Science Reviewer Locator is a tool to help you find, vet, and invite reviewers.

- Select the Web of Science Reviewer Locator tab to use the tool.



- The tool will return a list of suggested reviewers from Web of Science databases. Keep in mind that before inviting anyone, you still need to vet them for expertise match, appropriate seniority, and avoid any potential conflicts of interest.
- If available, click on **View Researcher Profile and Publications** to open a potential reviewer's Web of Science profile in a new window

| Reviewer Statistics (Agreed Invitations) | |
|--|-----|
| Reviews in Progress: | 0 |
| Completed Reviews: | 0 |
| Un-assigned After Agreeing: | 0 |
| Terminated After Agreeing: | 0 |
| Last Review Agreed: | - |
| Last Review Completed: | - |
| Last Review Declined: | - |
| Avg Days Outstanding: | 0 |
| Manuscript Rating: | 0 |
| Avg Review Rating: | 0.0 |
| View Researcher Profile and Publications | |

- To invite a reviewer, check the **Inv.** box. To queue a reviewer as an alternate, check the **Alt.** box.
- If a reviewer is not in the Editorial Manager database a popup box about proxy registration will appear. You do not need to follow the [Registering a New Reviewer](#) steps below; this is done automatically.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Inv. | Alt. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>This Reviewer candidate will be proxy-registered when you click Proceed or perform another search.</p> | |



Navigating Editorial Manager: Registering a New Reviewer

Many reviewers will already be in the EM database. However, if they aren't already, you'll need to register the desired reviewer prior to inviting them to review.

- Click **Register and Select New Reviewer**

Sorry, no Reviewers were found that match the search criteria.

[View All Decline Reasons](#)
[Register and Select New Reviewer](#)

- Enter the desired reviewer's email address

Register and Select New Reviewer

Please enter key information about the person you are registering as a Reviewer.

Insert Special Character

E-mail Address *

If entering more than one e-mail address, use a semi-colon between each address (e.g., joe@thejournal.com;joe@yahoo.com)
 Entering a second e-mail address from a different e-mail provider decreases the chance that SPAM filters will trap e-mails sent to you from online systems. [Read More.](#)

- Enter the reviewer's **Personal Information**. All text in red and with an asterisk is required.

User Information

Reviewer Role *

Default Login Role: Reviewer

Personal Information

Given/First Name *

Family/Last Name *

Title † (Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.)

Middle Name

Degree (Ph.D., M.D., etc.)

Country or Region *

- Once complete, select **Register User and Send Letter** and then **Send Letter** to send the proxy registration letter.
- You can now select the desired reviewer and proceed to sending invitations



Navigating Editorial Manager: Sending Reviewer Invitations

- Once you have finished making your selections, click **Proceed**.
- Here you will see a list of all selected reviewers and alternates. The default **Days to Review** is 10. Please [contact the journal office](#) if you would like to have a deadline extended prior to sending the invitation. Reviewers are always able to request extensions if needed.

| Reviewers to Invite | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------|--------------------------|
| Name | Letter | Days to Review | Do Not Invite |
| (Reviewer) | Invitation: New Reviewer <input type="text" value=""/> <input type="button" value="Customize"/> | 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- You have the option to **Customize** the default text if you would like to add a personal note to the reviewer.

| Reviewers to Invite | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------|--------------------------|
| Name | Letter | Days to Review | Do Not Invite |
| (Reviewer) | Invitation: New Reviewer Customize | 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- Click **Confirm Selections and Proceed**



Navigating Editorial Manager: Monitoring Reviewer Invitations

In the **Review Status** section of the **Invite Reviewers** page you can view the status of the reviewer invitations, view the **Decline Reason** text, and check whether there are any outstanding **Alternate Reviewers**.

| Review Status | | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Invited Reviewers (18) | | | |
| (Reviewer) | Review Complete Feb 17 2023 08:41AM | | |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Invited Feb 17 2023 10:04AM | | Uninvite Reviewer |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Invited Feb 17 2023 09:56AM | | Uninvite Reviewer |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Invited Feb 17 2023 09:46AM | | Uninvite Reviewer |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Invited Feb 17 2023 10:02AM | | Uninvite Reviewer |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Declined Feb 20 2023 10:35AM | No Reason Entered | Reinvite Reviewer |
| (Reviewer) | Reviewer Declined Feb 21 2023 06:36PM | View | Reinvite Reviewer |

- If you run out of reviewer invitations and alternates you will receive a notification that additional reviewers are required

Late Reviewers

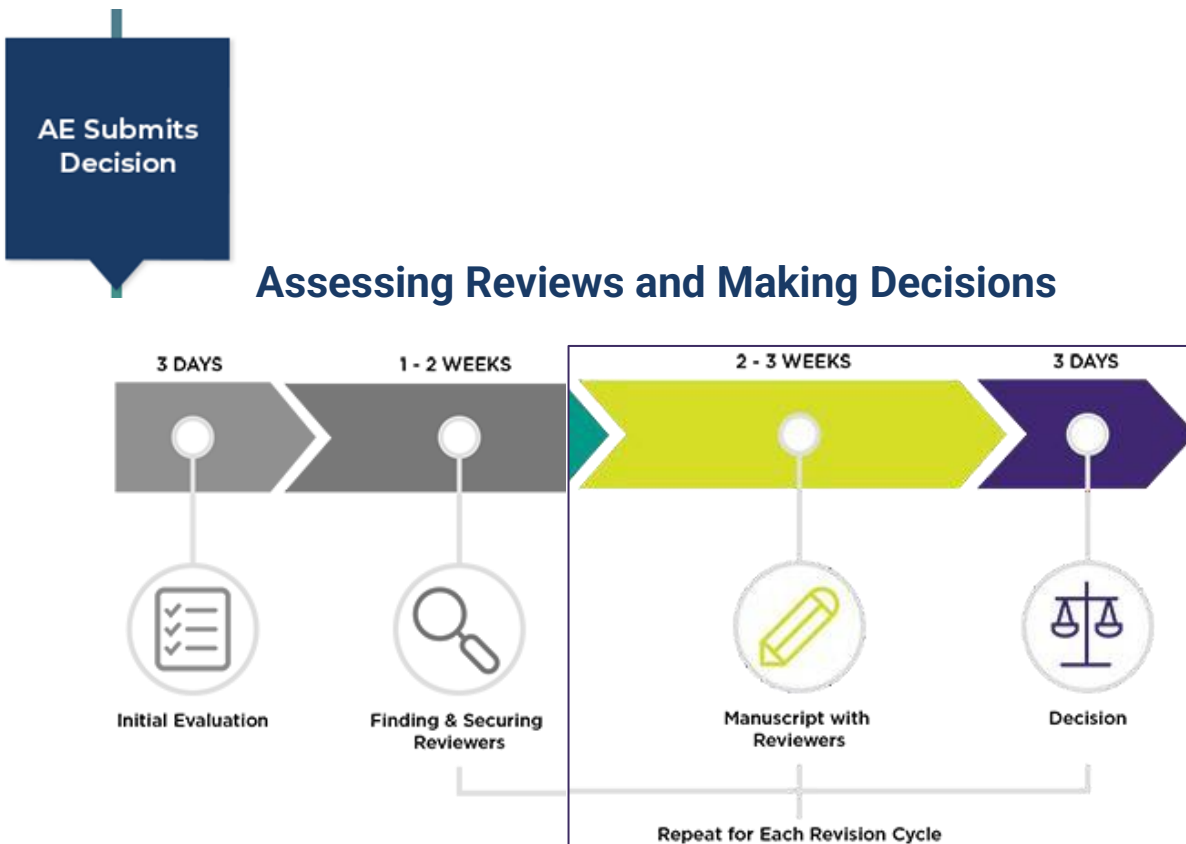
- Editorial Manager is set up to support you and the reviewers by sending them automated reminders so that you do not have to.
 - Invited** reviewers are given 6 calendar days to respond to a review invitation. They are sent two reminders before being automatically uninvited after 6 days if they do not respond. If an invitation expires, you can reinvite that reviewer again if you wish.
 - Agreed** reviewers are typically given 10 calendar days from when they accept the invitation.

They are sent reminders before, on, and after the due date before finally being unassigned after 25 days. At any time along the process, they can reply to those emails requesting an extension. We automatically grant extensions less than two weeks and anything above that, we check with you first for approval.

- Staff will follow up with you if the reviewer is exceptionally tardy and might remove unresponsive reviewers.

Reviewer Extension Queries

- If a reviewer emails you directly for an extension, please forward this to the journal office, we will process the extension
- Staff automatically extend reasonable reviewer extension requests but will contact you via [discussion](#) if someone is seeking a particularly long extension. Discussion comments come through via email and can also be accessed from the manuscript's Action links



Assessing & Adjudicating Reviewer Feedback

Peer review is an opportunity for scientific debate. It's likely that you'll encounter a situation where a review is **unfocused** or where two or more reviewers are **split** on what the outcome should be for a manuscript.

In these situations, you have the authority as Academic Editor to contextualize the reviews and

issue decisions. In these situations we recommend you avoid considering the reviews as votes to be tallied and instead:

- **Decide which reviewer comments are necessary** for the authors to address in order to meet the publication criteria and which are not essential. Do not edit the reviewer comments directly; in your comments explain to authors which parts of the review report they can disregard at the same time respecting the reviewer’s integrity.
- **Give weight to reviewer comments** based on individual expertise. If a reviewer you’ve selected has a specialized background that may be better suited to address some aspects of the paper more than others, assess their feedback on those aspects accordingly
- If you cannot make a decision on your own, consider asking the reviewers to expand their comments or, as a last resort, seek help from an additional reviewer. You can send emails to the reviewers directly from the **Send E-Mail** action link on the manuscript.

Making Your Editorial Decision

Combine your assessment of the reviewer feedback with the publication criteria to issue a decision. In your decision letter you will frame reviewers’ comments to provide context for the authors.

| Decision Options | Render this decision if... | What happens next |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Major Revision | The manuscript has the potential to be published but may not be accepted if the authors do not address substantive issues. | Authors have 60 days to revise and resubmit. When you receive the revision, you may choose to re- invite the original reviewers for another look or proceed to a final decision. |
| Minor Revision | The manuscript is suitable for publication but needs some minor adjustments. | Authors have 30 days to revise and resubmit. Upon resubmission, you verify that requested changes were made and usually accept the manuscript. |
| Accept | The manuscript is appropriate for publication exactly as is. | The manuscript is sent to production and published. |
| Reject and Transfer | The manuscript is better suited to another PLOS journal . You will select which journal you are recommending transfer to. | Authors may choose to accept or decline the transfer. The PLOS office will review and facilitate the transfer. |

| | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| Reject* | <p>The manuscript does not meet the publication criteria or requires substantial changes.</p> <p>*If appropriate, you may issue a reject decision but encourage the authors to resubmit after substantial revision</p> | <p>No further action required unless authors request an appeal.</p> <p>*If you invited the authors to resubmit and they chose to do so, the manuscript is considered a new submission. We will first approach you to handle the submission before inviting others.</p> |
|----------------|--|--|

The Decision Letter

The decision letter provides critical guidance to the authors on the next steps with their manuscript. We provide template decision letters in Editorial Manager that contain journal requests and auto-populate reviewer comments, but **it is your responsibility to customize these letters** with context to the reviewer comments and reasoning behind your decision.

A good decision letter:

- **Keeps the authors in mind** - What kind of constructive feedback would you like to receive if you were the author?
- **Gives context to the reviews** - Call attention to or note disregard of specific comments as appropriate. Reviewers also receive a copy of your decision letter. Your comments are helpful for reviewers to understand your reasoning.
- **Provides clear direction** for the authors to action - Indicate which comments are essential for the authors to address and which are optional prior to publication. Authors should be able to revise the manuscript based on the guidance of your decision letter and if they do so appropriately, the manuscript should be suitable for publication.
- **Makes clear which criteria the manuscript fails to meet** - A clear explanation in a reject decision provides finality or guidance on how to substantially revise and resubmit as a new submission.



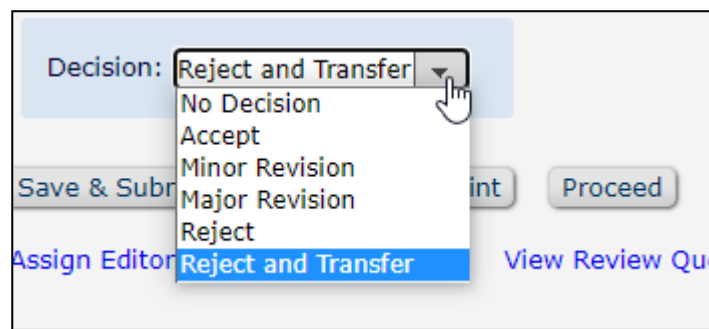
Additional Information

- You are expected to handle manuscripts through to a final decision (reject or accept). If you are not able to complete your assignment(s) for any reason, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting the journal office.
- Authors can opt-in to publish their [peer review history](#) alongside their accepted manuscript. If they do so, your decision letter will be published, along with any peer review comments, and the author responses for each revision.
- Reviewers also receive a copy of your decision letter.



Navigating Editorial Manager: Submitting a Decision

- Click on **Submit Editors Decision and Comments** from the manuscript Action menu.
- Add your comments (clarifying your decision, relaying extra thoughts on the reviewer comments etc.) in the **Comments to Author** section. These will pull into the decision letter.
- Select your decision (Reject and Transfer, Reject, Major Revision, Minor Revision, Accept) and click **Proceed** and **Proceed** again on the next screen. You will have further refinement options on the next screen.



If you select **Reject and Transfer** you will also have to select [which PLOS journal](#) you are recommending transfer to.

- This next screen shows you the decision letter. At the top of the screen you can change your decision if you have selected the wrong option via the **Modify Decision** dropdown.
- In the **Modify Letter** dropdown you can select the appropriate* template letter

- *If you are rejecting, the Reject template letter will automatically select **Reject After Review** and you will need to switch this to **Reject Before Review** when rejecting if the paper has not been reviewed.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Modify Letter: | Reject After Review (No Transfer) ▼ |
| Letter Subject: | Reject After Review (No Transfer) Reject Before Review (No Transfer) |

- Please read the decision letter to ensure it is accurate and your comments and all reviewer comments and attachments have been pulled in correctly. Once complete, click **Submit Decision with Draft Letter** at the top or bottom of the page
- The letter will go to the Section Editor for approval before being sent to the author.

Revisions

- After the authors return a revised manuscript, you may determine that:
 - a) The manuscript is ready for publication and issue an accept decision.
 - b) The original reviewers should be re-invited to the revision for further input before making a decision. (Try to avoid inviting new reviewers at this point unless it is absolutely necessary)
 - c) The authors have not adequately responded to the comments from the previous round of review and issue another revision decision or a rejection.
- We recommend that you aim for no more than two rounds of revision.



Re-Inviting Previous Reviewers to a Revised Manuscript

- On the **Previous Reviewers** tab of the **Invite Reviewers** page, click the **Select From Previous Reviewers** button

| Search Type | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| My Publication | Previous Reviewers | Web of Science Reviewer Locator |
| Previous Reviewers (2) | Email | Recommendation |
| [Redacted] | [Redacted] | Major Revision View Review |
| [Redacted] | [Redacted] | Minor Revision View Review |
| | | Select From Previous Reviewers |

- Select the previous reviewers you would like to re-invite then click **Proceed**

Page: 1 of 1 (2 total Reviewers)

| Select As | | Reviewer Name |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Inv. | Alt. | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | [Redacted] (Reviewer) [Redacted] |
| | | This publication: (This person reviewed the previous version as Reviewer 2) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | [Redacted] (Reviewer) [Redacted] |
| | | This publication: (This person reviewed the previous version as Reviewer 1) |

- The appropriate letter template will already be selected, which you may customize as necessary

| Letter |
|---|
| Invitation: Previous Reviewer on Revision ▼ Customize |

- Once you are ready, click **Confirm Selections and Proceed** to re-invite the selected previous reviewers

Beyond the Final Decision

- You may receive new submissions of previously rejected manuscripts; these are reassigned to the original editors with linked information from the original submission (reviewer comments and the decision letter). This information will be in the **Information for Editor** box on the **Details** page. Please use the previous manuscript number to look up the history.
- The journal staff may contact you with author queries, this will be done via discussion.
- You may be asked to manage an Appeal of a rejected manuscript. The journal staff will provide the information from the author containing their reasons for the appeal and any new documents. This will be managed via a discussion and the journal staff will handle all communication with the author.
- You may be consulted on Corrections - formal changes after a paper has been published



Navigating Editorial Manager: Discussions

Initiating a Discussion

- To begin a discussion select **Initiate Discussion** from the Action links of the paper.
- If the paper has previous discussions, Initiate Discussion will be replaced with **Discussion** and you will be taken to an intermediary page. On this page you will need to click **Start New Topic**
- Once you have initiated the discussion or started a new topic you will see the discussion box. There is no need to choose a template. Fill out the **Topic** and then your **Initial Comments**.
- Once your comments are ready you can add other participants via the search function. It is best to search via last name or email. When you have found the people you are looking for, tick the box next to their name. Then click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.
 - Do not select **Start Discussion Without Sending Letters**. If this is selected the discussion will start but no one will be notified and you may not get a response.

The screenshot shows a user interface for initiating a discussion. At the top, there are three buttons: 'Cancel', 'Start Discussion Without Sending Letters', and 'Proceed To Customize Letters'. The 'Start Discussion Without Sending Letters' button is crossed out with a red diagonal line. Below the buttons is a form with a dropdown menu labeled 'Choose Topic Template: Please Choose'. The form has two main sections: 'Topic' and 'Initial Comments', each with a text input area and a small icon in the bottom right corner.

- Then select **Confirm Selections and Proceed**.

Viewing Active Discussions

- You will receive Discussion invitations and notifications via email. These emails contain the manuscript number in the subject line as well as a link to directly click through to the Discussion in Editorial Manager.
- You can also access all manuscripts with active discussions from your **Main Menu** by clicking **Submissions with Active Discussions** under your **Editor 'To-Do' List**. A number encircled in blue indicates the number of unread Discussion posts.

| Editor 'To-Do' List |
|--|
| My Pending Assignments (7) |
| New Invitations (1) |
| New Assignments (0) |
| Submissions with Required Reviews Complete (0) |
| Submissions Requiring Additional Reviewers (1) |
| Submissions with One or More Late Reviews (1) |
| Submissions with Active Discussions (4) 3 |

- On the **Submissions with Active Discussions** page, you will be able to see and overview of each manuscript including specific columns about the active Discussions including **Topic** and **Date of Last Post** as well as an indication for any unread posts.

| Submissions with Active Discussions | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| Page: 1 of 1 (4 total submissions) | | | | | | Results |
| Action ▲ | Manuscript Number ▲▼ | Article Type ▲▼ | Article Title ▲▼ | Corresponding Author ▲▼ | Topic | Date of Last Post |
| Discussions View Submission Details Send E-mail | | Research Article | | | Initial Submission 2 | Jul 13 2021 04:40AM |
| Discussions View Submission Details D # Go to Submission Send E-mail | | Research Article | | | Initial Submission 2 advice re submission | Dec 15 2021 07:29AM Feb 02 2022 06:41PM |
| Discussions View Submission Details # Go to Submission Send E-mail | | Research Article | | | Editor Consult (available to editors to use) 1 | Oct 09 2023 07:47AM |
| Discussions View Submission Details Send E-mail | | Research Article | | | New Submission of a Previously Rejected Manuscript | Nov 20 2022 07:11PM |



POLICIES

Competing Interests and Ethical Publishing Practice

- If you become aware of a possible breach of an editorial or publishing policy, please notify the journal team immediately.

Competing Interests for Editors and reviewers

Editors (professional or academic, paid or unpaid) and reviewers must declare their own competing interests, and if necessary disqualify themselves from involvement in the assessment of a manuscript.

Common reasons for editors and reviewers to recuse themselves from the peer review process may include but are not limited to:

- They work at the same institution or organization as an author, currently or recently
- They collaborate with an author, currently or recently
- They have published with an author during the past 5 years
- They have held grants with an author, currently or recently
- They have a financial relationship with the company who funded the research
- They have a personal relationship with an author that does not allow them to evaluate the manuscript objectively

Code of Conduct for Editorial Board Members

- PLOS Editorial Board members follow the [Code of Conduct for Editorial Board Members](#), all [PLOS Editorial and Publishing Policies](#), and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#).

Flagging Issues to Staff

- Please forward any correspondences that occur outside of Editorial Manager with authors to journal staff that requires attention

- Appeals - This is to help maintain proper records of appeals and author correspondences and ensure that you have the support of the journal when dealing with tricky situations
- Author ethics issues like suspected image manipulation or plagiarism
- During review, please notify staff if you have serious concerns over a reviewer's behavior or the content of their review.
- We appreciate it when you notify staff if you accept a paper that is particularly press-worthy or otherwise notable.



RESOURCE LINKS

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| <p>PLOS COMPLEX SYSTEMS</p> <p>Contact us: complexsystems@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> | <p>PLOS COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY</p> <p>Contact us: ploscompbiol@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> |
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| <p>PLOS DIGITAL HEALTH</p> <p>Contact us: digitalhealth@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> | <p>PLOS GENETICS</p> <p>Contact us: plosgenetics@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> |
| <p>PLOS NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES</p> <p>Contact us: plosntds@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> | <p>PLOS PATHOGENS</p> <p>Contact us: plospathogens@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> |
| <p>PLOS SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>Contact us: sustaintransform@plos.org</p> <p>Guidelines for Editors</p> <p>Editorial Board</p> <p>Scope & Publication Criteria</p> <p>Editorial and Publishing Policies</p> <p>Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Guidelines for Reviewers</p> <p>Post-Publication Notices</p> | |