

Guidelines for Reviewers

Ethical obligations of reviewers of manuscript

- 1) Inasmuch as the reviewing of manuscript is an essential step in the publication process, and therefore in the operation of the scientific method, every scientist has an obligation to do a fair share of reviewing.
- 2) A chosen reviewer who feels inadequately qualified to judge the research reported in a manuscript should return it promptly to the editor.
- 3) A reviewer (or referee) of a manuscript should judge objectively the quality of the manuscript, of its experimental and theoretical work, of its interpretations and its exposition, with due regard to the maintenance of high scientific and literary standards. A reviewer should respect the intellectual independence of the authors.
- 4) A reviewer should be sensitive to the appearance of a conflict of interest when the manuscript under review is closely related to the reviewer's work in progress or published. If in doubt, the reviewer should return the manuscript promptly without review, advising the editor of the conflict of interest or bias. Alternatively, the reviewer may wish to furnish a signed review stating the reviewer's interest in the work, with the understanding that it may, at the editor's discretion, be transmitted to the author.
- 5) A reviewer should not evaluate a manuscript authored or co-authored by a person with whom the reviewer has a personal or professional connection if the relationship would bias judgment of the manuscript.
- 6) A reviewer must treat a manuscript sent for review as a confidential document. It should neither be shown to nor discussed with others except, in special cases, to persons from whom specific advice may be sought; in that event, the identities of those consulted has to be disclosed to the editor.
- 7) Reviewers should explain and support their judgements adequately so that editors and authors may understand the basis of their comments. Any statement that an observation, derivation or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation. Unsupported assertion by reviewers (or by authors in rebuttal) are of little value and should be avoided.
- 8) A reviewer should be alert to failure of authors to cite relevant work by other scientists, bearing in mind that complaints that the reviewer's own research was insufficiently cited may seem self-serving. A reviewer should call to the editor's attention any substantial similarity between the manuscript under consideration and any published paper or any manuscript submitted concurrently to another journal.
- 9) A reviewer should act promptly, submitting a report in a timely manner. Should a reviewer receive a manuscript at a time when circumstances preclude prompt attention to it, the un-reviewed manuscript should be returned immediately to the editor. Alternatively the reviewer might notify the editor of probable delays and propose a revised review date.
- 10) Reviewers should not use or disclose unpublished information, arguments or interpretations contained in a manuscript under consideration, except with the consent of the author. If this information indicated that some of the reviewer's work is unlikely to be profitable, the reviewer however, could ethically discontinue the work. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the reviewer to write the author, with copy to the editor, about the reviewer's research and plans in that area.