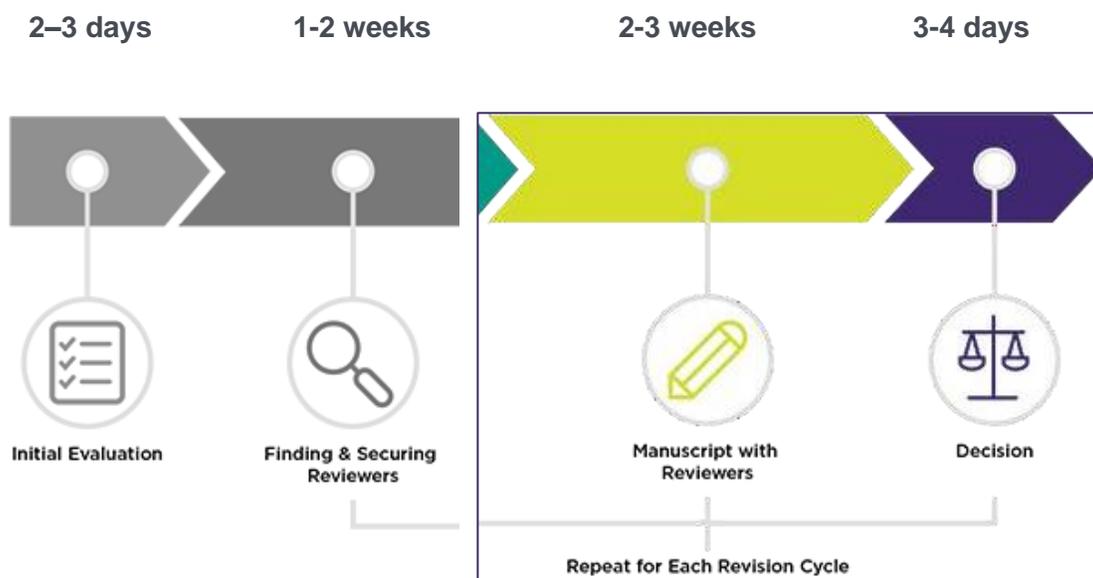


## Decisions After Peer Review



### Process

- Once we have received a full set of reviewer reports, you will receive an email from a staff editor. It will contain information about the reviewers and their expertise and request your suggestion for a decision. **We expect to receive your decision in 3-4 working days** – please let us know if you need more time.
- The email will also link to [Editorial Manager](#), where you will be able to see the full manuscript, the reviewer reports, and any cross-comments that we received.
- We expect the Academic Editor, who has the subject-specific expertise required, to scientifically assess the reports and propose a decision. The staff editor may suggest one but will often ask the Academic Editor what they think. Where relevant, the staff editor will also include comments to consider regarding journal policy, strategy, or if there is noteworthy information about the reviewers/peer-review process.

## Assessing & Adjudicating Reviewer Feedback

Things to keep in mind when recommending a decision after peer-review:

- **Decide which reviewer comments are necessary** for the authors to address in order to meet the publication criteria and which are not essential. We are happy to overrule reviewer requests if they seem far reaching and not required to substantiate the claims or conclusiveness of a paper.
- **Give weight to reviewer comments based on individual expertise.** If a reviewer has a specialized background (e.g. expertise on a given technique) that may be better suited to address some aspects of the paper more than others, assess their feedback on those aspects accordingly.
- **Don't tally the reports as votes.** For example, it is usually easier to overrule conceptual concerns than technical issues that undermine the robustness of the data or their interpretation.
- **Helpful link:** Visit the Guidelines for Reviewers page for [PLOS Biology](#)

## Making an Editorial Decision

Combine your assessment of the reviewer feedback with the publication criteria to recommend a decision.

Decision Options	Render this decision if...	What happens next
<b>Strict Major Revision</b>	<p>The manuscript has the potential to be published but the authors need to address substantive issues, which are such that revision may take up to <b>6 months</b>.</p> <p>The outcome of the revision is not certain.</p>	<p>Authors have 6 months to revise their work. When we receive the revision, we are likely to re- invite the original reviewers for another look.</p>

<p><b>Major Revision</b></p>	<p>The manuscript is likely to be ultimately published but experimental revision is needed, which may take up to <b>3 months</b>.</p>	<p>Authors have 3 months to revise. Upon receiving the revised version, you may be able to arbitrate the revision directly or choose to send it back to a subset of reviewers.</p>
<p><b>Light Major Revision</b></p>	<p>The manuscript will almost surely be published but some tidying up is necessary, which usually involves some minor experimentation and/or data re-analysis. The authors are given <b>1 month to revise</b> and we expect to accept the work.</p>	<p>Authors have 1 month to revise. Upon receiving the revised version, you almost certainly arbitrate the revision directly.</p>
<p><b>Open Rejection</b></p>	<p>The topic is of interest, but the work is not on solid ground and there would be so much to do that the amount of work exceeds what could be expected of a revision. You recommend a reject decision but open the door to considering a resubmission if further work enabled the authors to address all of the problems.</p>	<p>If you invited the authors to resubmit and they chose to do so, the manuscript is considered a new submission. We will approach you to be Academic Editor for the new submission and would try to secure the same reviewers.</p>

<b>Rejection</b>	<p>The manuscript does not meet the publication criteria or requires too many substantial changes.</p>	<p>No further action required unless authors request an appeal.</p>
<b>Minor revision</b>	<p>The manuscript is in principle suitable for publication but needs some minor adjustments that will be assessed by the staff editor.</p>	<p>You usually sign off at this stage, as the changes required are small and the staff editors can assess the author responses. In exceptional cases they may be in touch with you for one last look.</p>
<b>Editorial Accept</b>	<p>The manuscript is appropriate for publication exactly as is.</p> <p>It will undergo further checks to ensure reporting and format are appropriate, but it is scientifically ready.</p>	<p>The manuscript is sent to production and published.</p>

## The Decision Letter

The decision letter provides critical guidance to the authors on the next steps with their manuscript. It is written by the staff editors, who customize the letters with context to the reviewer comments, reasoning behind our decision, as well as prioritization of required

revisions. **Your feedback on the decision and necessary revisions is crucial for this** – if you have very detailed comments or requests for the authors, we can also convey them alongside the reviewer comments as “Comments from the Academic Editor”. Your identity will remain anonymous to the authors until we editorially accept the study.

A good decision letter:

- **Keeps the authors in mind** - What kind of constructive feedback would we like to receive if we were the author?
- **Gives context to the reviews** - Call attention to or overrule specific comments as appropriate. Reviewers also receive a copy of our decision letter, which is helpful for them to understand our reasoning.
- **Provides clear direction** for the authors to action - Indicate which comments are essential for the manuscript and which are further-reaching and not strictly required and/or can be addressed in writing.
- **Makes clear which publication 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.

## Need help?

Contact the specific staff editor that is handling the manuscript and has emailed you or [plosbiology@plos.org](mailto:plosbiology@plos.org) – if you have general queries unrelated to a specific manuscript

More [Resources for Editors](#)