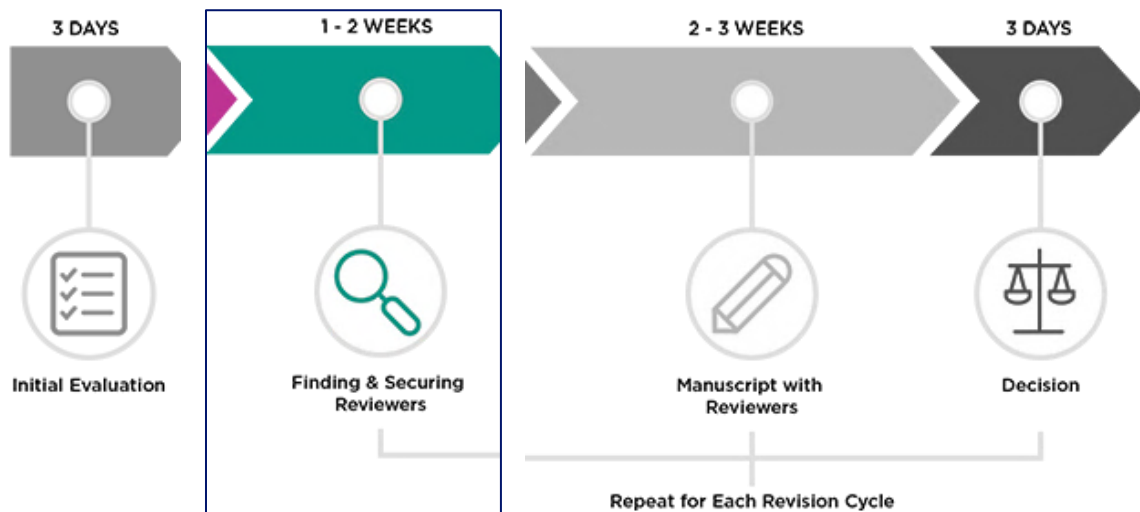


## Finding & Securing Reviewers



### ✓ Key Takeaways & Contents

- Suitable reviewers have expertise in the subject matter and methodology, are actively publishing, and are unbiased  
**Go to:** [Suitable Reviewers](#)
- Securing reviewers can be challenging. Editorial Board members have identified strategies and tips that can help.  
**Go to:** [Reviewer Invitation Tips from Editors](#)
- Reviewers are invited and invitations are managed in Editorial Manager  
**Go to:** [Inviting Reviewers in Editorial Manager](#)



## 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. **All accepted manuscripts must have at least one external reviewer.**

### 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 [checklist](#) before inviting.)
- Using databases such as [PubMed](#), [Google Scholar](#), 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.
- The default turnaround time for reviewers is 10 days. You can extend this but within reason. We recommend no more than 21 days. Reviewers can always request an extension, and there is language about this in the reviewer invitation letter.
- The Editorial Manager (EM) database is uncurated and is not set up as a resource to identify suitable reviewers. Please verify expertise and current contact information in an external database and then use EM to send invitations and manage peer review interactions.
- 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.
- If you cannot secure a second reviewer, you can review the manuscript yourself as Reviewer 2 but you **must** sign your review or mention in the decision letter that you acted as the reviewer.
- If necessary, the journal can help with statistical reviews. PLOS staff automatically invite a statistical reviewer for Clinical Trial manuscripts.



## INVITING REVIEWERS IN EDITORIAL MANAGER

All contact with reviewers occurs through Editorial Manager (EM). EM is an uncurated database of contact information only; it cannot be used to search by keyword. If a reviewer already has an account in EM, you'll be able to see some basic statistics on their past contributions.

On the **Invite Reviewers** page you can do the following:

- Search for reviewers. Use the Web of Science Reviewer Locator or search by email in EM using a reviewer's current contact information
- Invite reviewers as primary or alternates
- Register new reviewers. If someone does not have an account you can create one on their behalf order to invite them. We strongly recommend registering them with an institutional email address.
- Manage reviewer invitations. See the status of invitations, due dates, and decline reasons



View the [PLOS Academic Editor's Guide to Editorial Manager](#)



### Setting Expectations

- Securing reviewers can be challenging; people are busy. Aim to start inviting reviewers as soon as possible.
- On average, it takes 6-8 total invitations to secure 2 reviewers, but this varies depending on approach, subject area, time of year, etc.
- Expect to spend about an hour searching for and inviting reviewers per batch of 6-8 invites.
- We recommend only inviting the total number of reviewers you'd like—typically 2—and selecting the rest as alternates. EM treats the set of initial invitations like reviewer slots; it will continue to invite alternates until all initial invitation slots are filled or alternates run out.
- Invitations automatically expire after 6 days if the reviewer does not respond. Secured reviewers are automatically un-invited if they are 15 days late to submit. Both actions are preceded by a series of automated reminder emails.
- Be sure to check your email. All manuscript communications including reviewer status updates and important reminders occur over email. It's your role as Academic Editor to manage the peer review process and ensure the timely securing of reviewers for the authors.



Proceed to [Assessing Reviews & Making Decisions](#)

Links to more Resources for Editors:

[PLOS ONE](#) | [PLOS Climate](#) | [PLOS Global Public Health](#) | [PLOS Water](#)

Need help? Contact:

[plosone@plos.org](mailto:plosone@plos.org) | [climate@plos.org](mailto:climate@plos.org) | [globalpubhealth@plos.org](mailto:globalpubhealth@plos.org) | [water@plos.org](mailto:water@plos.org)  
[edboardsupport@plos.org](mailto:edboardsupport@plos.org)