Initial Evaluation

Key Takeaways & Contents

→ Assess the manuscript using:
  o The publication criteria
    Go to: Publication Criteria
  o Additional information provided by staff editors
    Go to: Information for the Academic Editor
  o Your own subject area expertise

→ Decide whether to send out for peer review or reject without review
  Go to: Peer Review or Reject?
PUBLICATION CRITERIA

The publication criteria are the same for *PLOS Climate*, *PLOS Global Public Health*, *PLOS Mental Health*, *PLOS ONE*, and *PLOS Water*. When you are conducting your initial evaluation, run the manuscript through the following criteria:

1. **The study presents the results of original research.**
2. **Results reported have not been published elsewhere.**
3. **Experiments, statistics, and other analyses are performed to a high technical standard and are described in sufficient detail.**
4. **Conclusions are presented in an appropriate fashion and are supported by the data.**
5. **The article is presented in an intelligible fashion and is written in standard English.**
6. **The research meets all applicable standards for the ethics of experimentation and research integrity.**
7. **The article adheres to appropriate reporting guidelines and community standards for data availability.**

Details about the publication criteria, article types considered, guidelines, and policies are in the links below:
The inclusive mission of these PLOS journals allows for the consideration of all submissions reporting original research or research methods contributing to the base of academic knowledge, and we evaluate submitted manuscripts on the basis of methodological rigor and high ethical standards, regardless of perceived novelty.

INFORMATION FOR THE ACADEMIC EDITOR

Be sure to read all email communications from PLOS. After you accept an invitation, an automated email is sent to you containing guidance on the next steps in the evaluation process and any notes left by a staff editor.

Before it reaches you, each manuscript undergoes a suite of technical and editorial checks. A staff editor may leave specific questions or guidance in the Information for the Academic Editor section of your invitation acceptance confirmation email. These notes can also be found at the top of the manuscript in the Information for Editor section of the Details page in Editorial Manager.

PEER REVIEW OR REJECT?

If a manuscript clearly doesn’t meet the publication criteria, it’s ok to reject without inviting external reviewers. In your decision letter to the authors, please ensure you have provided enough information for the authors to understand the reason for the decision, clearly articulating your reasoning and citing the specific publication criteria that were not met.

If you decide to proceed with peer review, keep in mind that all manuscripts must be evaluated by at least one external reviewer (preferably two) before they are accepted for publication.

Generally, you should decide on your next action within four days of agreeing to handle the manuscript. On the next page are some recommendations for when to reject without review.
Frequently Asked Questions & Comments

What should I do if the manuscript has poor language? Should it be rejected?

Publication criterion 5 can be a challenging nuance to navigate. If the methodology of the paper is rigorous but the language is poor, we encourage you to include this feedback in your revise decision rather than rejecting it so the authors have an opportunity to copy edit. If language concerns persist after revision, you may consider a reject decision at this time if it does not meet criterion 5. If you are at all unsure about applying this or any of the other criteria, contact the journal office.

Does PLOS provide copy editing services for authors?

To ensure that we make research published in PLOS available as quickly as possible, we do not copy edit manuscripts as part of our production process. However, PLOS has partnered with both American

Are you handling a cross-sectional study? Our Quality Assessment Tool for Cross-sectional Studies contains seven questions for you to consider as you determine whether the manuscript should be sent for external peer review.

Reject without review when

- There are serious methodological or analytical flaws that cannot be addressed by peer review
- Conclusions are unsupported by the data
  - For example, insufficient sample sizes
- Flawed, weak, or insufficiently detailed hypothesis, study rationale, methods, analyses, or results would prevent reviewers from properly evaluating the work
- The work is redundant without clearly referencing and discussing the existing literature
  - Exceptions: purposeful replication studies or reanalyses that clearly discuss the existing literature. See publication criterion 2.
- Apparent revisions would take the authors more than a few months to complete
  - This could include additional experiments, extensive reframing or recontextualization of the work, or extensive reanalysis.
  - An open reject with an invitation to resubmit can be considered when extensive revisions are required that would exceed the usual 45-day major revision deadline.

In all other situations, please seek external peer review.
Journal Experts (AJE) and Editage to provide discounted services to PLOS authors. We also offer author resources on our website: How to Edit Your Work.

The manuscript does not have any results.

Please double check the article type. While most manuscripts submitted to PLOS are classed as Research Articles and follow the standard format, PLOS ONE also accepts Lab Protocols, Study Protocols, and Registered Report Protocols, all of which do not contain results. You can read more about the article types each journal accepts by visiting the “What We Publish” links above.

Proceed to Finding & Securing Reviewers OR Assessing Reviews & Making Decisions

Links to more Resources for Editors:
PLOS Climate | PLOS Global Public Health | PLOS Mental Health | PLOS ONE | PLOS Water

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