

# Invitations to Handle Manuscripts

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## Key Takeaways & Contents

- Invitations to handle manuscripts come through email  
**Go to:** [Manuscript Invitation Anatomy](#)
- Invitations are sent by Section Editors and are informed by terms in your profile  
**Go to:** [Classification Matching](#)
- You always have the choice to accept or decline invitations. We have guidance to help you decide.
- **Go to:** [Responding to Manuscript Invitations](#)



## MANUSCRIPT INVITATION ANATOMY

Invitations to handle manuscripts are sent to you by email from Section Editors through Editorial Manager. Please ensure emails from [@plos.org](mailto:@plos.org) or [em@editorialmanager.com](mailto:em@editorialmanager.com) are not marked as spam.

Below is the template that most invitations follow. It can vary depending on the journal, the type of manuscript and any previous history. Please read these invitations carefully before responding.

**Subject:** PLOS [JOURNAL]: Invitation to handle manuscript [Ms #]

Invitation subject lines typically start with "PLOS" and contain the manuscript number

**Body:**

Dear [Title] [Last Name],

We would like to invite you to act as the Academic Editor for the following manuscript:

Check the author list to see if you have a **competing interest**. If so, please decline to handle the manuscript.

**Manuscript Number:** [Ms #]

**Title:** [Title]

**Author List:** [Names of all authors]

You can click this link to go to Editorial Manager where you can:

- download the full submission (the keywords and abstract are in the invitation below)

If you would like to view this submission, click this link to access your "New Invitations" folder in Editorial Manager: [Log in to New Invitations Folder](#). Please accept or decline this assignment within 24 hours.

- accept or decline the invitation (This is useful if you have multiple)

\*\*PLOS invites authors to publish the peer review history of their articles. Please note that, if this manuscript is accepted for publication and the authors opt-in to publishing the peer review history, all decision letters - which may include comments from you as the Academic Editor - will be published, along with the authors' responses to reviewer comments\*\*

This is a guideline. On behalf of the authors, we ask that you respond as soon as you are able.

**To ACCEPT to handle this paper, please click:** [Accept Editor Invitation](#)

This is information about [published peer review history](#).

\*Please note; if another Academic Editor has agreed to handle the manuscript the link will not appear on your homepage.\*

You can accept an invitation directly from your email. Clicking this link will navigate you to Editorial Manager, where you can then take action on the paper.

**To DECLINE to handle this paper, please click:** [Decline Editor Invitation](#)

Please contact us if you have any questions.

You can decline an invitation directly from your email. Clicking this link will navigate you to Editorial Manager, where you enter a decline reason.

Kind regards,  
PLOS [JOURNAL]  
[\[journalemail\]@plos.org](mailto:[journalemail]@plos.org)

**Keywords:** [keywords]

**Abstract:** [abstract]

Academic Editors are invited in queues paced automatically by Editorial Manager or triggered when an AE earlier in the queue declines the invitation. It sometimes happens that another editor has already accepted the invitation before you had the chance to respond.

The [journal email](#) is always the best to contact with questions at any stage of a manuscript. Questions will get routed to the appropriate contact.



## CLASSIFICATION MATCHING

For most submissions, invitations are sent by Section Editors and are informed by the Classification (PLOS taxonomy) and Keyword (free text) terms in your profile in Editorial Manager (EM). Academic Editors (AEs) are invited in queues paced automatically by EM or triggered when an AE earlier in the queue declines the invitation. **It's important to keep both your Classification and Keyword terms up to date.** Please maintain at least 10 Personal Classifications with a range from broad to specific.



Step-by-step instructions and screenshots for updating your profile can be found in our [PLOS Academic Editor's Guide to Editorial Manager](#)

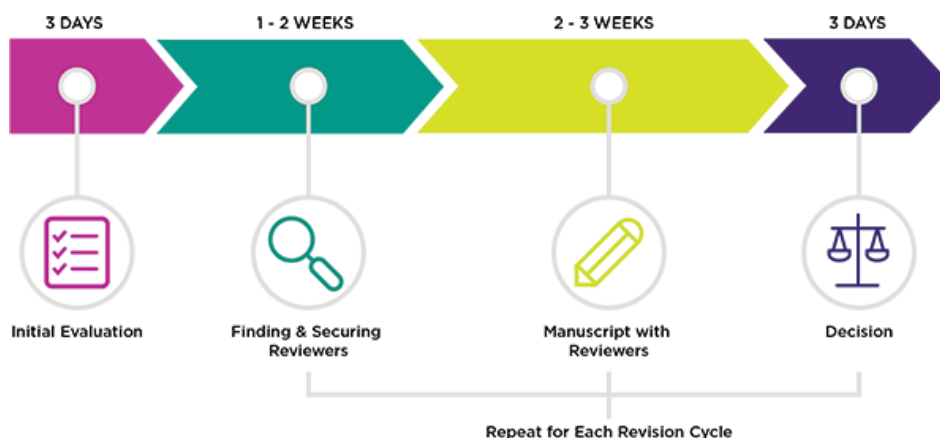


You may also occasionally receive personal invitations directly from PLOS staff to handle manuscripts requiring special attention. In these cases, the message will include clear and detailed information describing the circumstances and any specific handling requests.



## RESPONDING TO MANUSCRIPT INVITATIONS

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...

- ✓ 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\*\*

### ✗ Consider **declining** an invitation when...

- ✗ 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](#)

\* Due to the limitations of term-based invitations, it is likely that you will receive invitations that are outside your core area of expertise. **If you feel confident enough that you can identify [suitable reviewers](#) and put their [comments in context](#) for the authors, we suggest accepting the invitation and prioritizing comprehensive expertise in the reviewer panel.** On the other hand, if you do not feel able to identify reviewers with the necessary expertise or are concerned about your ability to interpret their comments, please decline the invitation.

\*\* 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 justified reject [decision](#). This helps the authors receive swift feedback and decide on the next steps for their manuscript.



## Frequently Asked Questions & Comments

### How many invitations am I expected to agree to handle?

You are not expected to accept all invitations that are sent to you. We expect editors to strive to agree to handle an average of **1-2** new manuscript assignments per month and a minimum of **6** per year.

Volume of invitations varies due to submission volume, composition and availability of editors in your subject area, and term-based matching to submissions. If you do accept an invitation, please handle the manuscript through to a final decision.

### I am receiving too many, too few, and/or outside-my-expertise invitations.

Most invitations are informed only by the terms in your profile so may not always be perfectly in your area of expertise. Please be sure to keep these terms as up to date and thorough as possible. Please [contact us](#) if you are having a consistently poor experience with invitations.

### The invitations say, "Please accept or decline this assignment within 24 hours." This is a fast turnaround.

This is a guideline; we understand you have competing demands on your time. On behalf of the authors, we do ask that you respond to invitations (accept/decline to handle a manuscript) as soon as possible.

### I agreed to handle a manuscript but it says it is no longer available.

Academic Editors are invited in queues paced automatically by Editorial Manager or triggered when an AE earlier in the queue declines the invitation. It sometimes happens that another editor has already accepted the invitation before you have had the chance to respond.



Proceed to [Initial Evaluation](#)

Links to more resources for Editors:

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

Need help? Contact:

[complexsystems@plos.org](mailto:complexsystems@plos.org) | [ploscompbiol@plos.org](mailto:ploscompbiol@plos.org) | [digitalhealth@plos.org](mailto:digitalhealth@plos.org) | [plosgenetics@plos.org](mailto:plosgenetics@plos.org) | [plosntds@plos.org](mailto:plosntds@plos.org) | [plospathogens@plos.org](mailto:plospathogens@plos.org) | [sustaintransform@plos.org](mailto:sustaintransform@plos.org) | [edboardsupport@plos.org](mailto:edboardsupport@plos.org)