

Handling Study Protocols

Study Protocols describe detailed plans and proposals for research projects that have not yet generated results. Unlike Research Articles, **you may issue an Accept decision for Study Protocols without sending the manuscript for external review.**

Editorial Process

Manuscript Invitations

- Look for the **article type** in manuscript invitations.
- After you accept a Study Protocol invitation, there will also be additional information from staff in the **Information for Editor** section of the confirmation email and Details page in Editorial Manager.

Initial Assessment

Study Protocol submissions differ from **Research Articles**.

- Study Protocols are **NOT** expected to include a Results section and should not be rejected due to a lack of results. They describe a protocol for planned research.
- Evaluate the submission against the [publication criteria](#) and [submission guidelines](#) for Study Protocols and decide whether to:
 - **Reject** without review
 - **Accept** without review*
 - *If you have the relevant expertise to evaluate the subject matter and methodology. This is different from Research Articles.
 - **Invite reviewers** to peer review the protocol**
 - ****Only one external review is required** for Study Protocols alongside your assessment as Academic Editor.

The [Center for Open Science](#) has a pre-registration and pre-analysis plan [template](#) for authors that you may find helpful as a guide during your evaluation.

Peer Review

- You can issue an Accept decision for Study Protocols without external review if you have the relevant expertise to evaluate the subject matter and methodology yourself.
- Refer to the specific [reviewer guidelines and forms](#) for Study Protocols
- The goal is not to suggest modifications to the study design. Rather, you and/or the reviewers should assess and provide feedback on whether:
 - the study is well-suited to test the hypothesis
 - it includes enough detail for replication
 - the proposed statistical analysis is suitable
 - the quality of the writing is sufficient

Editorial Decisions

- Ensure you have provided enough information in the decision letter for the authors to understand your decision, clearly articulating your reasoning with reference to our [publication criteria](#) and [submission guidelines for Study Protocols](#)

More [Resources for Editors](#)

Need help? Contact plosone@plos.org