ELEVENTH PRESS INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING™

A Full-Stack Peer Reviewed Press & Multidisciplinary Syndication Network

OFFICIAL GUIDE · EP-G-03

Reviewer Handbook

How to accept an invitation, write a constructive and evidence-based report, apply the 1–5 scoring rubric and recommendations, and meet the 14-day window.

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BENCHMARKED AGAINST

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Purpose and scope

PURPOSE

To set out what Eleventh Press expects of a peer review: how to respond to an invitation, the ethical obligations of a reviewer, how to structure a constructive report, and how to apply the scoring rubric, recommendations and confidence rating.

SCOPE

Applies to all peer review of research articles, reviews and book manuscripts, under every review model offered by the journal.

AUDIENCE

Peer reviewers invited by Eleventh Press, including first-time reviewers and members of the Board of Reviewers.

At a glance: ten key requirements

1. Accept an invitation only if you have the expertise, no conflict of interest and time to finish within 14 days.
2. Treat the manuscript as confidential; do not share it, use its contents or upload it to generative AI tools.
3. Do not try to identify the authors; tell the editor if you recognise the work.
4. Declare any competing interest, and decline if it would compromise your judgement.
5. Structure the report: summary, overall assessment, major issues, minor issues.
6. Make comments specific, evidence-based and actionable, and keep the tone professional.
7. Give an overall score from 1 to 5, a recommendation and a confidence rating.
8. Keep author-facing comments free of your identity and of the recommendation itself.
9. Use confidential comments to the editor for concerns such as suspected misconduct.
10. Request an extension rather than let the deadline lapse silently.

Benchmarked standards and basis

This guide is benchmarked against the external standards below. “Aligned with” describes the standard each requirement follows; it is not a claim of membership in, or certification by, the issuing body.

STANDARD AND ISSUING BODY	EDITION	HOW THIS GUIDE APPLIES IT
COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers Committee on Publication Ethics https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.9	Version 2 (2017)	The basis for reviewers' obligations on expertise, timeliness, confidentiality, competing interests and conduct.
Standard Terminology for Peer Review NISO / STM https://www.niso.org/	ANSI/NISO Z39.106-2023	Defines the review models (identity transparency, reviewer interaction, review information published) used in this handbook.

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STANDARD AND ISSUING BODY	EDITION	HOW THIS GUIDE APPLIES IT
ICMJE Recommendations: responsibilities of peer reviewers International Committee of Medical Journal Editors https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/	Current edition	Confidentiality, including the prohibition on uploading manuscripts to AI tools that cannot assure confidentiality.
COPE Core Practices: peer review processes Committee on Publication Ethics https://publicationethics.org/core-practices	2017	Transparent description of the review process and the handling of reviewer conduct.
EQUATOR Network reporting guidelines EQUATOR Network https://www.equator-network.org/	Library, current	Checklists reviewers use to assess the completeness of reporting for each study design.

01 The role of the reviewer

Peer reviewers advise the editor; they do not make the decision. Your report helps the editor judge whether a manuscript is sound, original and suitable for the journal, and helps the authors improve the work whatever the outcome. The best reviews are those that a thoughtful author, even one whose paper is rejected, would recognise as fair and useful.

For multidisciplinary manuscripts you may be invited to assess one component in particular, such as the statistical model, the qualitative fieldwork or the engineering design. The invitation will say so. Concentrate on that component, comment on others where you are competent, and say plainly where you are not.

02 Responding to an invitation

Before accepting, ask yourself three questions:

- Expertise: can I evaluate this manuscript, or the component I am asked about, to a high standard?
- Conflicts: do I have any personal, professional, financial or intellectual interest that could affect, or be seen to affect, my judgement — including a close relationship with the authors, a recent collaboration or directly competing work?
- Time: can I submit a considered report within 14 days of accepting?

If the answer to any question is no, decline promptly, which lets the editor invite someone else without delay. Suggestions of alternative reviewers are always welcome. If you need more time, request an extension when you accept or as soon as you know.

03 Confidentiality, anonymity and the use of AI tools

A manuscript under review is confidential, unpublished work. Do not share it or discuss it with anyone, including colleagues, without the editor's permission, and do not use any information from it for your own research or advantage. Delete or destroy your copy after the review is complete.

Do not upload the manuscript, or any part of it, to a generative AI tool or other external service that cannot guarantee confidentiality; doing so may disclose the authors' unpublished work. Your report must be your own assessment. Under double-anonymised review, do not try to identify the authors. If you recognise the work, tell the editor in your confidential comments.

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04 Structuring the report

A complete Eleventh Press review contains the following parts:

- Summary: two or three sentences in your own words on what the manuscript claims and how. This shows the authors and the editor that you have understood the work.
- Overall assessment: the main strengths, and whether the conclusions follow from the evidence.
- Major issues: problems that affect the validity of the conclusions, such as design flaws, inappropriate analyses, missing controls or unsupported claims, each with a suggested remedy where you can give one.
- Minor issues: clarity, presentation, missing references and small errors, ideally referenced by page and line.
- Reporting: whether the relevant reporting guideline has been followed and whether data and code are available as described.

Be specific and actionable. “Needs more rigour” is not useful; “the sample size in Section 3.2 appears underpowered for the effect size claimed — please report a power analysis or temper the conclusion” is. Comment on the work, never on the authors, and avoid sarcasm and personal remarks.

05 Scores, recommendations and confidence

Alongside your comments, the review form asks for three ratings:

- Overall score (1 to 5): 5, an excellent and important contribution with no significant weaknesses; 4, a strong contribution with minor weaknesses; 3, a sound contribution with weaknesses that need attention; 2, a contribution with major weaknesses that limit its validity or value; 1, fundamentally flawed or unsuitable.
- Recommendation: Accept; Minor revisions (limited changes, no further review needed in most cases); Major revisions (substantial changes, likely to be re-reviewed); or Reject.
- Confidence: how sure you are of your assessment, given your expertise in the manuscript's subject and methods.

Keep the recommendation out of your comments to the authors; the editor communicates the decision, which may differ from any single recommendation.

06 Comments to the editor

Confidential comments to the editor are the place for anything that should not go to the authors: your view on the suitability of the work for the journal, a note that you recognised the authors, or concerns about possible misconduct, such as plagiarism, duplicate publication, image manipulation or data fabrication. Report such concerns to the editor; do not investigate them yourself or contact the authors.

07 Deadlines, revisions and recognition

You have 14 days from accepting an invitation to submit your review. If you need more time, request an extension rather than letting the deadline lapse silently: editors would rather adjust the timeline than lose a well-matched reviewer.

If the manuscript is revised, you may be asked to review the revision. Focus on whether your points and those of other reviewers have been addressed, and avoid raising new issues unless they arise from the changes or are serious.

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Reviewers who connect their ORCID iD to their account with update permission can have submitted reviews credited on their ORCID record. Members of the Board of Reviewers can be issued a formal service certificate.

08 Compliance checklist

Use this checklist before you submit, review or report. Every item reflects a requirement set out above.

- ☐ I have the expertise to review this manuscript, or the component assigned to me.
- ☐ I have no conflict of interest, or I have declared it to the editor.
- ☐ I can submit within 14 days, or I have requested an extension.
- ☐ I have kept the manuscript confidential and have not uploaded it to any AI tool.
- ☐ I have not tried to identify the authors.
- ☐ My report includes a summary, an overall assessment, major issues and minor issues.
- ☐ My comments are specific, evidence-based and actionable.
- ☐ I have checked reporting against the relevant guideline and data availability.
- ☐ I have given an overall score, a recommendation and a confidence rating.
- ☐ My comments to the authors do not reveal my identity or my recommendation.
- ☐ Any concerns about misconduct are in my confidential comments to the editor.

09 Frequently asked questions

How long do I have to complete a review?
Fourteen days from accepting the invitation. Request an extension if you need more time.

Can I ask a student or colleague to help with a review?
Only with the editor's prior permission, and their name should be given to the editor so they are bound by the same confidentiality.

Can I use an AI tool to help write my review?
Do not upload the manuscript or any part of it to an AI tool that cannot guarantee confidentiality. The assessment must be your own.

What should I do if I suspect plagiarism or data manipulation?
Explain your concern in the confidential comments to the editor. Do not investigate it yourself or contact the authors.

Will my name be shown to the authors?
Not under single- or double-anonymised review. Under open review, identities are known, and if the authors opt in to open peer review your report may be published.

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