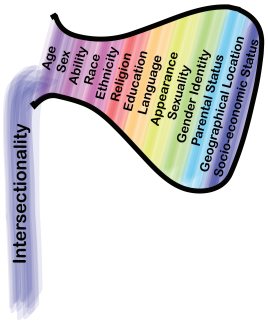
Guideline for Inclusive Manuscript Review

eLIFE Community Ambassadors



Manuscripts are central to scientific research: they present research to the scientific community and are currency for obtaining funding. However, there are known biases in how manuscripts are reviewed for different groups of people. When reviewing a manuscript, we recommend using the following guidelines to help reduce biases, therefore permitting more equitable reviews and publishing of scientific work.

Reading/evaluating the manuscript

✓ Confirm you do not have a conflict of interest before agreeing to review the manuscript.
✓ Initially review manuscripts blindly, where the author's identity is hidden, if possible.
✓ Read the manuscript early (in advance of the deadline) and multiple times.
✓ If permitted, review the manuscript with a trainee. Be sure to communicate this with the journal to ensure it's allowed, so the trainee can receive credit for doing so.
✓ Do not discount the science because of poor language.
✓ Evaluate whether the manuscript fits the scope of the journal.
✓ Have a standardized list of questions for every manuscript review. Examples include: Figure by figure does it have the right controls? Does it answer the questions asked and are the results fairly interpreted? Are there critical experiments missing? Is there sufficient raw data for the reader to interpret results? Are methods sufficient to reproduce work?
✓ Undergo bias training to be aware of your own biases.

Writing the review

✓ Use gender inclusive language (they/them) for review documents.
✓ Give clear and constructive feedback.
✓ If the manuscript is good, say that it is good – you are not obligated to come up with negative critiques.
✓ If a portion of the review is beyond the scope of the paper and rather a suggestion for future research, state this explicitly to authors and editors.
✓ Ask yourself if you would appreciate the review and find it constructive.
✓ Print and reread your review and/or read aloud to assess tone.
✓ Consider providing an open review.

This guideline was written by eLife Community Ambassadors 2019-2020 taking part in the Intersectionality Initiative. Please feel free to use, spread, and change.