



KIND PEER REVIEW GUIDE

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FOREWORD

We often hear about the importance of publishing preprints, but there is much less discussion about reviewing preprints. This guide is both a resource to help you in the reviewing process and a reminder that reviewing preprints is possible and also valuable to everyone involved.

This book will provide guidance on the characteristics of a constructive, fair, and rigorous review, empowering researchers to make kind and excellent contributions to science through peer review and beyond the traditional publishing system. Especially if you're a graduate student, by reviewing preprints you can gain experience in reviewing scientific publications without waiting to be assigned as a reviewer by journal editors.

You can also use this guide as a tool to guide your journal club, turning it into a preprint review club.

We hope you enjoy it!

What is a preprint

From the [ASAPbio resource center](#):

"A preprint is a scientific manuscript that is uploaded by the authors to a public server. The preprint contains data and methods, but has not yet been accepted by a journal. [...] Preprints allow scientists to directly control the dissemination of their work to the world-wide scientific community."

Why review preprints?

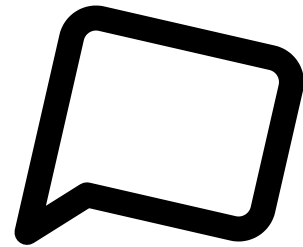
Preprints offer reviewing opportunities to people who may not be on journals' radars. They also allow people to build their reviewing skills and experience, and they may be a way to circumvent professional gatekeeping where it exists.

Write reviews that people can respond to

The purpose of a review is to improve the science and communication of it; therefore, comments should be actionable.

The changes, requests, and improvements should be within the scope of the paper and be attainable.

Comments should be clear and concise with some direction as to how a specific issue can be solved.



How to write responses to reviews

Reviewers are people and they are taking time out of their day to curate a review. It is okay to disagree with a comment, but you should be clear on why you disagree and remember to still be nice!



Reply to each point by saying how you have made changes and where it is reflected in the new manuscript.

Kind peer review checklist

All papers

- The preprint includes the main objectives in the introduction and addresses all of them in the results.
- Visuals are colour vision deficit friendly.
- There is a transparent list of author contributions.
- The results are relevant to the methods and objectives.
- The figures are clear, well-explained, and relevant to the objective/question.
- The title and abstract reflect the main findings or conclusions of the paper.
- The abstract includes a summary of important hypotheses.
- The authors build from previous papers into their own ideas in a clear way.
- Proper grammar and spelling are employed.
- The methods and ideas are easy to follow.

Specific situations

- The code is available, referenced and reproducible.
- The data is available (and you can actually access it), and all data sources are cited.
- The software/package that was used to analyse data is cited.
- The authors address the social impacts of the findings/experiment/data collection.
- [FAIR](#) and [CARE](#) principles are respected.
- The methods contain all the necessary information to help the reviewers have a clear visualization of the experimental design.
- The conclusion is reliable/real or it refers to some processes that have never been tested in the context of the study (esp. in ecology/biology).
- The authors explain all key variables in the introduction.

About your review

- My review does not contain accusations, defamation, or insults.
- My review contains a conceptual summary showing that I understood what the paper is about.
- My review addresses major and minor concerns in a clear, focused and concise way.
- My review highlights good aspects of the paper.
- My review is actionable and authors can respond to every comment that I've made.
- Each comment contains a depersonalized interpretation of the issue.
- Each comment has suggestions for improvement.
- I am ready to be proven wrong by the authors.


Examples of kind preprint reviews




 prereview.org

**PREreview of
Implementing Code
Review in the Scientific
Workflow: Insights
from Ecology and
Evolutionary Biology**

This review was made as part of a community of practice supported by Authors' background: GH: theoretical ecology, open science, open data, ecological networks VC: plant ecology, conservation biology, taxonomy, ecological modelling MG: plant biology, se...



 prereview.org

**PREreview of
Overconfidence
undermines global
wildlife abundance
trends**

This review was made as part of a community of practice supported by Authors' background: Open science, open data, network ecology, plant ecology, conservation biology, taxonomy, ecological modelling, plant biology, seed science and technology, agronomy...

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Reviewing preprints offers early career researchers and students a way to develop their reviewing skills and contribute to maintaining rigour in scientific research.

A good review interrogates the methods and conclusions of the manuscript, but in a kind and constructive way.