

GUIDE TO REVIEWING AN ARTICLE FOR SAJOT

BASIC PRINCIPLES TO WHICH REVIEWERS OF ARTICLES SHOULD ADHERE

Peer review of articles for the South African Journal of Occupational Therapy (SAJOT) is an important and critical part of the publication process and in ensuring the integrity of the journal. It is a requirement for acceptance on the major scientific publication platforms that SAJOT articles have undergone a critical anonymous review by at least two independent reviewers. This is to ensure the scientific worth of the article under review and the standing of the journal in the scientific and occupational therapy community. SAJOT is a scientific journal and as such, the articles are required to meet the standards of rigorous research. The scientific strength of the articles are also an important contributor to the growth and development of the profession in South Africa.

The following summary of guidelines for conducting a review is provided for reviewers of articles. It is **strongly** recommended that reviewers read the complete information given in the 'Ethical Guidelines for peer review' provided by the Committee on Publications Ethics (COPE)¹ and in the 'Ten Simple Rules for Reviewers published' by Bourne and Korngreen².

'Respect the confidentiality of peer review and do not reveal any details of the manuscript or its review during or after the peer review process beyond those that are released by the Journal'¹. Many of us have received reviews where it is fairly obvious who reviewed the work. It is hard to maintain anonymity in small scientific communities, and you should reread your review to be sure (*that*) it does not endanger the anonymity. Do not share the manuscript with colleagues unless the Editor has given permission to do so. If the identity of the author(s) has been inadvertently discovered, the reviewer should refrain from discussing the review with the author(s) at the time of the review **and** at the time of publication. The reviewers should make sure that any comments that have been written on the article itself under the option track changes do not contain any identifying information. (See the detailed instructions for ensuring a blind review that can be found under the SAJOT **Instructions to authors** (pg....). If the identity of the author(s) has been inadvertently discovered, the reviewer should refrain from discussing the review with the author(s) at the time of the review **and** after publication. The cloak of anonymity is not intended to cover scientific misconduct.

'Do not use information obtained during the peer-review process for your own or any other person's or organisation's advantage, or to disadvantage or to disadvantage or to discredit others'¹. You must contact the editor before communicating with anybody else regarding the paper under review and ... 'you should declare all potential conflicting interests, seeking advice from the journal if you are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest'¹. Do not take on the review if there is the slightest possibility of conflict of interest. Conflicts arise when, for example, the paper is poor and will likely be rejected, yet there might be good ideas that you could apply in your own research, or, someone is working dangerously close to your own next paper. 'With conflict, there is often a gray area; if you are in any doubt whatsoever, consult with the editor who has asked you to review'².

Very importantly you should **'...not accept a review assignment unless you can accomplish the task in the requested time frame** - Learn to SayNo'². 'Late reviews are not fair to the authors, nor are they fair to journal staff. Think about this next time you have a paper under review and the reviewers are unresponsive. You do not like delays when it is your paper, neither do the authors of the paper you are reviewing. Moreover, a significant part of the cost of publishing is associated with chasing reviewers for overdue reviews'². No one benefits from a delayed process.

Write reviews that you would be satisfied with and find helpful as an author. 'Terse, ill-informed reviews reflect badly on ... (the journal). Support your criticisms or praise with concrete reasons that are well laid out and logical'².

'Be objective and constructive in (your) review, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libellous or derogatory personal comments'¹. A poorly written review is as bad as a poorly written paper. Try to be sure the editors and the authors can understand the points you are making. A point-by-point critique is valuable since it is easy to read and to respond to. For each point, indicate how critical it is to your accepting the paper.

The form provided on the SAJOT website will assist here and should be completed.

'Give the editors a clear answer as to your recommendation for publication. to enable the review process to be completed. Reviewers must select an option in the drop down box to be found at Step 6 in the review process **ie Accept submission, revisions required, resubmit for review, decline submission.** If the reviewer wishes to see the article again once the recommendations have been implemented the **resubmit for review** option must be selected. If it is felt that the article does not need to continue in the review process and that it is sufficient for the editor to ensure that the changes have been implemented then the **revisions required option** should be selected.

It is recommended that reviewers also make use of the "track changes" for commenting on different aspects of the article.

REFERENCES

1. Hames I (on behalf of COPE). COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers. COPE Council, March 2013, v.1 http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines_0.pdf.
2. Bourne, P.E., Korngreen, A. Ten simple Rules for Reviewers. <http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.0020110>