Initial Evaluation

3 DAYS
Initial Evaluation

1 - 2 WEEKS
Finding & Securing Reviewers

2 - 3 WEEKS
Manuscript with Reviewers

3 DAYS
Decision

Repeat for Each Revision Cycle

Key Takeaways & Contents

→ Assess the manuscript using:
  
  • *PLOS Water* publication criteria
    Go to: *[PLOS Water Publication Criteria](#)*
  
  • Your own subject area expertise

→ Decide whether to send out for peer review or reject without review
  Go to: *[Peer Review or Reject?](#)*
PLOS WATER PUBLICATION CRITERIA

Does the manuscript meet the PLOS Water publication criteria?

1. The study presents the results of original research.
2. Results reported have not been published elsewhere.
3. Experiments, statistics, and other analyses are performed to a high technical standard and are described in sufficient detail.
4. Conclusions are presented in an appropriate fashion and are supported by the data.
5. The article is presented in an intelligible fashion and is written in standard English.
6. The research meets all applicable standards for the ethics of experimentation and research integrity.
7. The article adheres to appropriate reporting guidelines and community standards for data availability.

Journal Scope, Guidelines, and Policies

- What We Publish
- Submission Guidelines
- Editorial and Publishing Policies

PLOS Water’s inclusive mission allows for the consideration of all submissions reporting original research or research methods contributing to the base of academic knowledge, and we evaluate submitted manuscripts on the basis of methodological rigor and high ethical standards, regardless of perceived novelty.

PLOS Water does not copyedit manuscripts, nor do we expect you to. Publication criterion 5 can be a challenging nuance to navigate. If the methodology of the paper is rigorous, we encourage you to issue a revise decision rather than reject so the authors have an opportunity to copyedit. If you are at all unsure about applying this or any of the other criteria, contact us at water@plos.org.
PEER REVIEW OR REJECT?

If a manuscript clearly doesn't meet the publication criteria, it's ok to reject without inviting external reviewers. In your decision letter to the authors, please ensure you have provided enough information for the authors to understand the reason for the decision, clearly articulating your reasoning and citing the specific publication criteria that were not met.

If you decide to proceed with peer review, keep in mind that all manuscripts must be evaluated by at least one external reviewer (preferably two) before they are accepted for publication.

Generally, you should decide on your next action within four days of agreeing to handle the manuscript. Below are some recommendations on when to reject without review. In all other situations, please seek external peer review.

### Reject without review when...

- There are serious methodological or analytical flaws that cannot be addressed by peer review
- Conclusions are unsupported by the data (e.g., insufficient sample sizes)
- Flawed or very weak hypothesis, study rationale, or reporting prevents reviewers from fairly evaluating the work
- Redundant work that doesn't clearly reference and discuss the existing literature (exceptions: purposeful replication studies or reanalyses that clearly discuss the existing literature. See publication criterion 2)
- Apparent revisions would take the authors more than a few months to complete. An open reject (with invitation to resubmit) can be considered when extensive revisions are required that would exceed the usual 45 day major revision deadline.
Proceed to Finding &Securing Reviewers OR Assessing Reviews & Making Decisions

More Resources for Editors

Need help? Contact water@plos.org