HOSTING A FRONTIERS RESEARCH TOPIC – A HOW-TO GUIDE

Similar to an online conference, your Frontiers Research Topic will allow you to intensify collaboration, shape the discussion, and guide the research direction in your field.

The following guidelines are meant to provide you with further practical information regarding the Research Topic platform, your role as Topic Editor, as well as the Frontiers peer-review process. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the journal team of the relevant Frontiers journal. Contact details can be found here. Your journal team will also contact you soon to set up a phone call to guide you through the process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 YOUR ROLE AS A TOPIC EDITOR

As a Research Topic host and expert in the field, you are responsible for defining the scope of your Topic (discussed with the relevant Specialty Chief Editor), for identifying and contacting potential contributors, as well as for assessing potential contributions based on abstract submissions. You oversee the review process of submitted manuscripts by acting as the handling Editor (assuming this constitutes no conflict of interest). You are also listed as a Guest Associate Editor on the Frontiers editorial board for the duration of the Topic. Details on the Frontiers review process may be found in section 5 of these guidelines.

The success of a Research Topic will depend on the active involvement of all Topic Editors. We recommend that Research Topics be hosted by a minimum of two Topic Editors, so as to distribute the workload and avoid editing papers authored by your close friends, colleagues, and collaborators, which may constitute a perceived conflict of interest. Research Topics should aim to receive around 15-20 contributions.

1.2 FROM LAUNCH TO COMPLETION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE HOSTING PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Topic publication</th>
<th>Once your Topic is approved, it will be posted online. This will be done by Frontiers a few days after acceptance, but you may also publish the Topic yourself.</th>
<th>See details in section 2.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>Once the Topic has been published, your journal team will schedule a phone call with you, to guide you through the process.</td>
<td>See here for contact details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for Participation</td>
<td>Potential contributors must receive a formal Call for Participation, an email which will provide them with all the details they need regarding Frontiers, our publishing model and fees, and the Research Topic.</td>
<td>See details in section 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract submissions</td>
<td>While abstract submissions are not compulsory, we recommend that you set an abstract deadline and remind your contributors about this, as abstracts will allow you to plan ahead and identify contributions that may not be suited to the Topic. When receiving abstracts, you will be asked to enter the system and assess them.</td>
<td>See details in section 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full manuscript submissions</td>
<td>Manuscripts submitted to your Topic will be assigned to you (or to one of your co-Topic Editors) and will undergo the normal Frontiers peer review process. Should a manuscript be accepted, it will be published immediately upon acceptance; there will be no delays caused by waiting for other manuscripts in the Research Topic to complete the peer review process.</td>
<td>See details in section 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial and E-book</td>
<td>At the end of the process, you will be able to submit a short, free of charge Editorial article, so as to bring the collection together. Research Topics with a minimum of 10 contributions are also compiled as E-books once all articles have been published.</td>
<td>See details in section 6</td>
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</table>
In order for a Frontiers Research Topic to constitute a dedicated collection of articles around a theme, a minimum of 4 articles must be published within it. Should a Research Topic close with fewer articles than the required number, the Editorial Office will notify the Topic Editors, and the Research Topic will be subsequently dissolved and removed from the Frontiers website. In this case, any published articles would remain online within the journal they were published in, and any manuscripts under review would still be considered for publication within the journal to which they were submitted.

2. THE RESEARCH TOPIC PLATFORM

2.1 ACCESSING THE RESEARCH TOPIC MANAGEMENT TOOLS

To host your Topic, you created an account on our research network, Loop, which will allow you to access and manage your Topic and editing assignments. To access the Research Topic management tools, log into your account and navigate to your Research Topic public page, accessible via the relevant journal and section. The management tools are accessible by clicking on the 'Manage topic' button under the title.

There, you will find several tabs which will provide you with an overview of your Research Topic status, and allow you to view, access and take actions related to contributors, abstracts and manuscripts. Each tab has a range of filters allowing you to quickly navigate to specific records. You will also find a tab containing these guidelines, for quick reference in the future.

2.2 YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC DASHBOARD

The 'Dashboard' tab provides you with an overview of the status of your Research Topic.
Your current tasks are listed on the left of the page. You can directly take related actions by clicking the relevant button on the task card. Your tasks will be updated regularly as your Research Topic progresses.

The current deadlines for your Research Topic are indicated in the progress bar. The deadlines are as follows:

- **Abstract submission deadline**: This is the deadline for abstracts, which is visible on the Research Topic homepage. No automatic reminders are sent for abstract submissions, but you will be able to easily follow up on this manually through the system. Abstracts can still be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the option to remind confirmed contributors to submit an abstract will not be available anymore.
- **Manuscript submission deadline**: This is the deadline for full manuscripts, which is visible on the Research Topic homepage. Automatic reminders are sent 60, 30, and 7 days before the deadline to the confirmed and pending contributors who have not yet submitted.
- **Extended manuscript submission deadline**: This is a deadline you can set in advance and which will not be visible on the homepage until after the original deadline has passed. A notification will be sent to confirmed and pending contributors 3 days after the original deadline, informing them that an extended deadline has been set. A final reminder will be sent 5 days before the extended deadline itself.

### 2.3 VIEWING THE DETAILS OF YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

To view the details of your Research Topic, navigate to the ‘Edit Topic’ tab. You will then be able to access the following three subtabs:

- **Journal details**: See the details of the specialty section(s) and journal(s) that your Research Topic is hosting in. This has already been agreed with the Specialty Chief Editor and cannot be changed.
- **Topic Editors**: See the details of Topic Editors.
- **Topic details**: View your Research Topic title, description, image (if applicable) and deadlines.

**Note**: The details of your Topic can only be modified in consultation with the Editorial Office. Should you wish to add or remove a Topic Editor, or modify the deadlines, please contact your journal team.
3. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

3.1 IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

You should already have compiled a list of potential contributors for your Topic, which you submitted with your proposal. You can add additional potential contributors at any time, keeping in mind submission deadlines. Some Topic Editors have also successfully used conferences as an opportunity to discuss their Topics and potential interest with their peers.

While the number of potential contributors will depend on the field and scope of the Topic, we recommend that a maximum of 50-80 colleagues be contacted. There is however no limit to the number of submissions and accepted manuscripts a Research Topic can have.

During the introductory phone call, your Journal team will provide you with a toolkit on how to gain potential contributors for your Research Topic.

3.2 ACCESSING THE LIST OF POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

The list of potential contributors may be found beneath the ‘Contributors’ tab. Contributors can be filtered depending on their status.

- All Contributors: All contacts for the Research Topic, including potential contributors uploaded on the platform and all authors of submitted abstracts.
- To be Contacted: Potential contributors who have not yet received the Call for Participation.
- Pending: Potential contributors who received the Call for Participation but have not yet responded.
- Confirmed: Confirmed contributors who have either accepted the Call for Participation, or are listed as the corresponding author on a submitted abstract that was accepted.
- Co-author: All co-authors of submitted abstracts that were accepted (not including the corresponding author).
- Declined: Contacts who indicated they would not be able to contribute to the Topic.
Potential contributors can also be filtered by whether or not they have submitted an abstract or manuscript. You can search for individual potential contributors by clicking on the search icon and entering a name or email address in the search bar.

Selecting a potential contributor and clicking ‘General actions’ will give you the option to edit the potential contributors details, remove the potential contributor, manually change their status or compose a personal message.

3.3 ADDING NEW POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

To add additional potential contributors, click on the ‘Add contributors’ button on the ‘Contributors’ tab.

In the pop-up that appears, enter the email address of the potential contributor who you wish to add and click ‘Search for user’. If the user already has a Loop account, the additional fields will be automatically populated. If not, you can manually add their details. Click ‘Add contributor’ to finalize.

You can add multiple new potential contributors by downloading the excel template, filling it out, and uploading it directly. The format of the template should not be modified, but the “Contribution Title” and “Middle Name” columns are optional.
3.4 SENDING THE CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

The Call for Participation is a template message which includes all the information regarding the Topic that the potential contributors need – especially the deadlines, a statement about the fees, and details regarding Frontiers as well as the Research Topic. As such, the template itself cannot be edited. It is referred to as a Call for Participation, rather than as an invitation, to ensure that contributors are made aware of the publishing fees from the start and to avoid any confusion.

We recommend sending the Call for Participation no later than a month after the Topic has been posted online, to ensure that authors are given enough time to prepare their abstract and full manuscript submissions.

When sending the Call for Participation, it is important to reach out in a way that will stand out in the inbox of your potential contributors. We recommend adding a personal note to the official Call for Participation and sending personalized messages from your own email account as well. This will allow you to define your vision further and clarify how your colleagues’ work might fit in and contribute to the Topic.

The Call for Participation can be sent by clicking on the ‘Call for Participation’ button on the task card that appears in your dashboard.
If you would prefer to send the Call to individual potential contributors, navigate to the ‘Contributors’ tab and select the box next to the potential contributor that you would like to contact. Click on the ‘Reminders’ button followed by ‘Send call for participation’ on the dropdown menu.

Both of these actions trigger a pop-up containing the template message. If you did not select individual potential contributors, the address bar will be populated with the email addresses of all potential contributors who have the status ‘To be Contacted’. You can edit the salutation (depending on your relationship with the potential contributors) and add a personal note (optional but strongly recommended). The messages will be sent to each potential contributor individually, but any changes made to the salutation and personal message box will apply to all selected contributors.

Once you are ready to send the call, click “Send Message”.
3.5 Monitoring and Reminding Contributors

Once the Call for Participation has been sent, contributors will automatically be moved from “To be contacted” to the “Pending” subtab, and then to “Confirmed lead authors” or “Declined” once they click on the accept/decline links in the email they received.

We provide reminder templates specific to the status of each potential contributor. To send a reminder, navigate to the ‘Contributors’ tab and click on the ‘Reminders’ button. Like the Call for Participation, reminders can be personalized by adding a note at the top.
Automatic reminders are sent to the confirmed and pending contributors who have not yet submitted 60, 30, and 7 days before the manuscript submission deadline and 5 days before the extended manuscript deadline.

When contributors confirm their interest through the system, we strongly encourage you to contact them as a follow up with a personal email, to establish a connection and find out what they plan to submit and who they may have as co-authors. We also recommend that you personally remind the confirmed contributors at least one month before the manuscript submission deadline.

4. ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

Abstracts submitted by potential contributors are strictly for your use as the Topic Editor. They allow you to assess the intended contributions for both quality and scope and will not be published anywhere on the website.

Submitting an abstract is not a prerequisite for submitting a manuscript. Please bear in mind, however, that abstracts are an excellent tool for motivating contributors and establishing a timeline for the Topic. As mentioned above, contributors will not be automatically contacted regarding upcoming abstract submission deadlines, but manual reminders may be sent easily from your Frontiers account.

4.1 VIEWING AND ACCEPTING/REJECTING ABSTRACTS

You will be notified by email when a new abstract is submitted to your Topic and will be able to access it by navigating to the ‘Abstracts’ tab. On the left of the page, a list of submitted abstracts and their status will be displayed. By clicking on an abstract in the list, you will be able to:

- View the abstract details;
- Make a decision to accept or reject the abstract;
- Send a message to any of the authors by clicking on the email address listed under their name in the author list.

If an abstract is accepted, the corresponding author and co-authors will be listed with the status ‘Confirmed’ and ‘Co-author’ on the ‘Contributors’ page, respectively.
4.2 SPONTANEOUS SUBMISSIONS

Although the majority of submissions will result from the Call for Participation, researchers and scholars looking to submit to Frontiers may find that their manuscript fits within your Topic. In such cases, we encourage authors to first contact the Topic Editors and to submit an abstract, but some might submit the full manuscript directly through the Research Topic website. You can decide whether or not to include these papers in your Topic, but spontaneous submissions often turn out to be valuable contributions. Should you have concerns regarding a submitted manuscript, please contact the Editorial Office immediately.

Spread the word!
Encourage more submissions to your Topic by using our guidelines (How to Recruit Authors) to help you in tweeting, blogging and sharing about your Topic on social media and beyond.

4.3 SUBMITTING A MANUSCRIPT TO YOUR OWN RESEARCH TOPIC

We of course welcome contributions from Topic Editors. Topic Editors are able to handle each other’s abstracts (if any), as these are only for record-keeping purposes. Please note, however, that co-Topic Editors should not edit or review their fellow Topic Editors’ manuscript submissions. In these instances, an Associate Editor from the editorial board of the hosting specialty will be assigned to edit the manuscript.

To submit a manuscript to your Topic, visit your Frontiers account on Loop and proceed by clicking on “Submit” in the top bar and by selecting the relevant field, specialty, and Research Topic. During the submission process, you will be invited to select your preferred Associate Editor from the board of the relevant journal and specialty.

5. MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS AND REVIEW

Contributions to your Research Topic can be of different article types, which vary per field. Please have a look at the hosting specialty’s homepage for more information.

All manuscripts are subject to peer review and, if accepted, will appear as part of the online collection on the Research Topic website and as a downloadable e-book, if applicable (see details in section 6). At Frontiers, articles are published immediately upon acceptance; there will be no delays caused by waiting for other manuscripts in the Research Topic to complete the peer review process.

The articles in your Topic will be freely available online and submitted to the digital archives under which the related Frontiers journal is indexed (e.g. PubMed Central, EMBASE, CAS, Scopus). The publishing fees for authors vary depending on the journal and article type. For more information on publishing fees, please click here.
Topic Editors act as handling Associate Editors for manuscripts submitted to their Topic and, as such, are referred to as Guest Associate Editors. The Guest Associate Editor is responsible for:

- The initial evaluation of the manuscript;
- Inviting reviewers and ensuring the thoroughness of the reviews;
- Checking the review reports and initiating the interactive phase of the review process;
- Mediating the discussion to ensure a timely and fair review;
- Making a final decision for acceptance or recommendation for rejection.

The Frontiers collaborative review process has been designed to optimize the quality of published articles by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Handling Editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles, and your final decision on a manuscript should take into account all of the reviewers’ feedback. It is important that you are familiar with the Frontiers policies and practices outlined below.

In our experience, finding suitable reviewers is the most time-consuming step in the review process. We therefore encourage you to start making a list of potential experts early on, once you know what types of contributions will be coming in.

5.1 ACCESSING MANUSCRIPTS AND ENTERING THE REVIEW FORUM

To view the manuscripts that have been submitted to your topic, navigate to the ‘Manuscripts’ tab on your Research Topic Management page. On the left of the page, a list of all submitted manuscripts and their status will be displayed. Clicking on a manuscript will display the manuscript details, including the Associate Editor and Reviewers (if assigned).

To access your editing assignments, navigate to a manuscript for which you are listed as Associate Editor and click on the ‘Enter Review Forum’ button.

As a co-Topic Editor, you may also get read-only access to the review forum of manuscripts submitted to your Topic which have been assigned to your co-Topic Editors.
5.2 SUBMISSION AND INITIAL EVALUATION

When submitting a manuscript to your Topic, authors are requested to select the Topic Editor who they believe to be the most knowledgeable and appropriate for editing their manuscript. This “preferred Editor” will be automatically assigned to handle the review process.

Should you be assigned to handle a manuscript, you will receive an email with a direct link to the review forum. The first time you enter the forum, you will be prompted to answer a list of questions regarding potential conflicts of interest (see below for details on how to proceed if any of these applies). If appropriate, you may also re-assign manuscripts you are handling to your co-Topic Editors by selecting the corresponding option in the right-hand side of the review forum (please discuss with the other Topic Editor before taking such action).

Validate submission details
As soon as you download the manuscript (1) and any Supplementary Materials (2), please verify the below. Should there be an issue with any of the points mentioned which affects your ability to proceed with the review process, please contact the Editorial Office immediately.

- Ensure that you do not have a conflict of interest (COI) with any of the authors or the submitted research. You may always refer to the Conflict of Interest section of the Review Guidelines for a list of potential COIs. A diverse team of Topic Editors helps to prevent potential COIs during the review process. Should any COI be identified after a manuscript has been assigned to you, please re-assign the manuscript to one of your co-Topic Editors using the “Change Editor” option in the review forum. Should all Topic Editors have a COI, or should one of the authors on the manuscript be a Topic Editor, please contact the Editorial Office immediately, so that an Associate Editor from the board may step in to handle the manuscript. The names of reviewers and Editors are published on accepted articles; it is important to eliminate any potential COI at this stage.
- Ensure that the manuscript fits within the scope of the Topic and specialty.
- Ensure that the authors have chosen the correct article type (see here for a description).

All manuscripts are checked for potential verbatim plagiarism. If serious issues are identified in manuscripts you are handling, the Editorial Office will notify you and the authors as part of our standard procedure. No action is required from you unless specifically requested for very serious concerns.

Verify the soundness of the manuscript
Please read through the manuscript and determine whether it should be sent for review (3) or recommended for rejection to the Specialty Chief Editor (4). A manuscript can only be recommended for rejection before reviewers are assigned or after the authors have been given a chance to respond to the reviewers’ comments.

Please bear in mind that, at Frontiers, it is the soundness of the research that should be evaluated, not its potential impact. Before reviewers are invited, rejection is only justified if:

- The manuscript is poorly written (at a standard that will severely impact the ability of the reviewers to assess it);
- The manuscript contains significant objective errors; or
- The standards of research quality or ethics are insufficient.
Should a manuscript not fit the scope of your Topic, please contact the Editorial Office, so that it may be re-directed.

5.3 INVITING REVIEWERS

How to invite reviewers
Should no issues be identified in the initial verification of the manuscript, you will be asked to secure the required number of reviewers within 7 days. To invite reviewers, select the “Manage Reviewers” tab (1), where you can find the status of the review invitations.
Frontiers requires a minimum of 2 reviewers for the majority of article types and, as such, we recommend that you send out invitations to at least 4 reviewers. There are two options for inviting reviewers:

Send invitations to members of the Review Editor board (2): Use the search bar to enter the name of the Review Editors you would like to invite (3). You can also search for Review Editors by keyword (4). Send invitations to external reviewers: Fill out the relevant information in the “Invite an External Reviewer” tab (5).

Once this has been done, click on the “Invite” icon (6) and choose to compose a personal message or simply send the generic invitation. You may also select multiple reviewers to invite in a single batch. Reviewers who accept to review a manuscript are automatically given access to the review forum.

When inviting reviewers, please ensure that they do not all share the same affiliation and that different schools of thought are represented, to safeguard the fairness and objectivity of the review process. Reviewers should hold a PhD with post-doctoral experience, or an equivalent degree with several additional years of academic work, or the equivalent number of years to a recognized qualification in the relevant field of research. Reviewers should have a recognized affiliation and a proven publication record in the subject area. Please also note that you should not invite your co-Topic Editors to review manuscripts that you are editing to avoid potential COIs (see here for details).

Please do not “Assign” reviewers (7) unless they have first confirmed to you that they are willing to review a manuscript and have no conflicts of interest. In addition, do not assign yourself to review a manuscript you are handling. Contact the Editorial Office if a situation has arisen where you feel this may be necessary.
**Automatic invitations**
If the required number of reviewers is not reached after 7 days, automatic invitations will be sent to the most appropriate Review Editors on board (recruited by the Associate Editors and selected using a keyword-matching algorithm), so as to avoid any delays and to ensure the authors can receive prompt feedback on their submission. You are however strongly encouraged to invite reviewers yourself. You can also revoke any reviewers invited automatically.

**The independent review phase**
Once reviewers are assigned, they are expected to fill out a template review questionnaire within 15 days. The review questionnaires vary depending on the article type and have been designed to facilitate the work of the reviewers as well as to focus on objective issues. At this stage, reviewers conduct their review independently and do not have access to any comments made by the other parties. The status of the review reports is shown in the “Manage Reviewers” tab, where it is also possible to send reminders to delayed reviewers (1) or to access submitted reports under the relevant reviewers’ tabs (2).

**Revoking a reviewer**
If someone accepts a review assignment but turns out to be unsuitable, becomes severely delayed or unresponsive, or fails to contribute meaningfully to the review, you may remove them from the assignment by clicking on the “Revoke” icon (3) and writing a personal note explaining why this action had to be taken. You will then need to assign a new reviewer to the manuscript. As the Associate Editor, it is your responsibility to ensure a fair and timely review for every manuscript.

5.4 **GIVING AUTHORS ACCESS TO THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW FORUM**

You will be automatically notified once independent review reports have been submitted and will need to ensure that each report provides a meaningful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript at hand, with particular regard to the robustness of evidence for the conclusions reached. If you feel that a review report is incomplete or not thorough enough, please contact the reviewer directly or reach out to the Frontiers editorial office for assistance. Reviewers can and should modify insubstantial reports, or be replaced if they are unable or unwilling to do so.

Once the review reports have been checked, you will be asked to activate the interactive review forum, thus giving the authors access to the reviews. Even if the independent review reports are unfavorable to the authors, the interactive review forum must be activated and the authors allowed the opportunity of rebuttal; this is a fundamental Frontiers principle.

To activate the forum, select the “Activate Interactive Review” option (1) and choose the recommended level of revisions based on the review reports (2). This choice will determine the amount of time that authors are given to respond to the comments (minor, moderate or substantial revisions would allow...
authors 15, 25 or 35 days respectively). Add a personal message and finalize the activation by clicking on “Activate” (3).

As the Frontiers review process takes place on the online discussion forum, we ask that all comments be inserted there directly, for record-keeping and transparency to all involved.

5.5 MEDIATING THE DISCUSSION TO ENSURE A TIMELY AND FAIR REVIEW

While reviewers and authors are the main players in the interactive review forum, you will be responsible for ensuring that the review is fair, transparent, collaborative, and timely. Please note that you can access and post comments in the review forum at any time.

Timely review process: how does the interactive review work?
Authors are asked to respond to reviewers’ comments in the forum and to upload a revised version of
their manuscript (accessible under the “Download latest PDF” icon, in the right-hand side menu). You, the authors, and the reviewers can now see all comments in each reviewer’s tab. Our system automatically notifies participants when a new comment or revised manuscript is uploaded and gives 10 days to respond. This process can continue for multiple rounds, as necessary.

**Adding your own comments**

To add your own comments to the review forum, click on the “Add Comment” icon (1) below the relevant discussion point. A box will appear where you can enter text (2). Comments auto-save when you click outside of the comment box.

Continue to respond throughout the review forum using the same process. After all of your comments have been made, scroll to the top of the page and click “Submit all Comments” (3) – this will make your comments visible to the other participants, who will be notified by email.

We rely on the handling Editors to ensure the constructiveness of the participants’ interaction. Should a dispute arise at this stage, you will act as a mediator or invite new reviewers for additional opinions.
**Reviewers’ recommendation**

Reviewers may “withdraw/recommend for rejection” at any stage, which discontinues their participation from the process. They can choose this option if they are unable to continue, if they disagree with the contents, or if they consider that the manuscript cannot be sufficiently improved and wish to recommend it for rejection. While their report will still be available in the forum, reviewers who withdraw from the process will remain anonymous, and their recommendation will be sent to you so that you may either:

- Invite another reviewer;
- Recommend rejection of the manuscript based on the reviewers’ recommendation.

The reasons for withdrawal/recommending rejection are accessible in the review forum under the withdrawn reviewer’s tab (these are not visible to the authors).

On the other hand, should a reviewer be satisfied with the authors’ responses and revisions, they will indicate this by endorsing publication of the manuscript. Please note that most article types require a minimum of 2 reviewers’ endorsements to be accepted for publication. Furthermore, no review may be left pending in order for a manuscript to move forward in the process.

If you are unsure of how to proceed, please contact the Editorial Office.

### 5.6 MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

Once all reviewers have completed the review process, either by endorsing the manuscript or withdrawing their participation, you should proceed to take a final decision on the manuscript. When making a decision you should read the final version of the manuscript, and take into account all reviewer comments and author responses, whilst applying your own judgement and expertise. Where a decision is unclear, you should consider inviting further reviewers, or get in touch with the Editorial Office for advice on how to proceed.

- Please note that if you accept the manuscript your name will appear on the article as the handling Editor. You thereby publically validate the paper as a sound scholarly contribution. Do not accept a manuscript if serious concerns by the reviewers that you agree with have not been addressed – you are responsible for safeguarding the literature in your role as Editor.

**Recommending rejection**

Should you decide to recommend a manuscript for rejection based on reviewers’ recommendations, click on “Recommend Rejection” in the right-hand side menu and provide clear justifications for your decision. Your recommendation will be sent to the Specialty Chief Editor, who verifies that the review was conducted in accordance with Frontiers’ policies and takes the final decision. Note that, at this point, the authors are not aware of your recommendation. Only after the Specialty Chief Editor confirms rejection are you, the authors, and the reviewers notified of this final decision. Furthermore, while the Specialty Chief Editor may decide to forward your feedback to the authors, this will not be done automatically.
Remember that, at Frontiers, it is the soundness of the research that should be evaluated, not its potential impact. Rejection can only be recommended prior to sending the manuscript to peer review or after the authors have been given a chance to respond to the reviewers’ comments, if the manuscript is poorly written, if it contains significant objective errors, or if the standards of research quality or ethics are insufficient.

**Accepting a manuscript**

If all reviewers endorse publication, you are asked to take the final decision on the manuscript. Should a reviewer endorse publication prematurely but would still like to post comments to the authors, you may re-activate their review by clicking on the “Re-Activate Review” icon.

If you have any minor additional recommendations for the authors, you now have a final opportunity to communicate those to the authors by selecting the blue envelope sign next to their name (please also copy in the Editorial Office).

Once the final manuscript is re-submitted through the forum, you can accept it for publication by clicking on “Accept Manuscript (Initiate Final Validation)” in the right-hand side menu.

The final validation stage includes a final technical check by the Editorial Office, to ensure that the manuscript is ready to enter production, and starts immediately upon selection of the “Accept Manuscript” option; you should therefore only accept the submission once the final version of the manuscript has been uploaded by the authors.
5.7 GRANTING EXTENSIONS

While the Frontiers platform has been designed to ensure a thorough yet rapid review process, extensions may be requested as follows:

Independent review stage: by emailing the Editorial Office;
Interactive review stage: through the review forum directly, once the option becomes available, or by emailing the Editorial Office.

Should the Editorial Office receive long extension requests, we will forward these to you for approval. Please do let us know if you are contacted by an author or reviewer asking for more time, so that we may extend the deadlines accordingly.

6. EDITORIAL AND E-BOOK

If your Research Topic receives at least 10 contributions, we are able to produce an e-book of the collection once all of the manuscripts have completed the review process (see here for an example). At that stage, you will receive a message asking for your Editorial and, once it has gone through peer-review, will be contacted by our Production Office regarding the order in which the articles should appear in the e-book as well as the image to be displayed on the title page of the collection. The Editorial is an excellent way to introduce your Topic, summarize its contributing articles, and convey to the reader the aims and objectives of the research pertaining to the Topic at hand. Editorials have a maximum word count of 1,000 for Topics with 5-10 articles. The word limit can be increased for each additional article in the Topic, up to a maximum of 5,000 words for 50 articles or more (see our Author Guidelines for more details). When citing the contributions to your Research Topic in the Editorial, please do not list them in the reference list. Instead, hyperlink the in-text citation to the article directly.

Editorials are approved by the Specialty Chief Editor of the specialty in which the Topic is hosted, receive a DOI, are citable, published in PDF and HTML format, and submitted for indexing in digital archives such as PubMed Central, depending on the hosting journal. Topic Editors are not required to pay a fee to publish an Editorial.

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