Welcome to the Frontiers community of Editors.

The following guidelines are meant to provide you with further practical information regarding your role as Review Editor as well as the Frontiers peer-review process and platform. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the journal team directly using their field Editorial Office account.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. FRONTIERS’ EDITORIAL BOARD 3
2. HOW-TO’S FOR YOUR ROLE AS REVIEW EDITOR 3
   2.1 SHOWCASE YOUR EXPERTISE ON LOOP 3
   2.2 REVIEW MANUSCRIPTS 5
   2.3 CONTRIBUTE TO THE SECTION’S EDITORIAL DEVELOPMENT 5
3. THE FRONTIERS REVIEW PROCESS 6
   3.1 INITIAL VALIDATION 7
   3.2 EDITORIAL ASSIGNMENT - INITIAL ASSESSMENT 9
   3.3 DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST 10
   3.4 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PHASE 12
   3.6 THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW PHASE 15
   3.7 MAKING A FINAL DECISION 17
      Endorsing for publication 18
      Withdrawing and/or recommending rejection 19
   3.8 FINAL VALIDATION 21
   3.9 REQUESTING AN EXTENSION 21
4. CONTACT DETAILS 21
1. **FRONTIERS’ EDITORIAL BOARD**

Editorial boards comprise 4 distinct roles, whose responsibilities are divided as follows:

1. The **Field Chief Editor** oversees the entire journal and acts in collaboration with the Editorial Office to assist and guide the Specialty Chief Editors.

2. The **Specialty Chief Editors** oversee the individual journal specialties. They also build a board of 15-20 Associate Editors for their own specialty.

3. The **Associate Editors** act as handling editors for submitted manuscripts, accepting them for publication following peer-review, or recommending rejection to the Specialty Chief Editor. Associate Editors also invite Review Editors to the editorial board and can invite external reviewers for peer-review.

4. The **Review Editors** act as reviewers for submitted manuscripts, engaging with the authors, Associate Editor and each other in an interactive review forum.

To learn more about the different roles on the editorial board, please click [here](#).

**NOTE:** The following guidelines mention both “Review Editors” and “reviewers”. While the former specifically refers to Review Editors on the editorial board, the latter encompasses both Review Editors and external reviewers invited by the Associate Editors to review specific manuscripts.

2. **HOW-TO’S FOR YOUR ROLE AS REVIEW EDITOR**

2.1 **SHOWCASE YOUR EXPERTISE ON LOOP**

To join the editorial board, you created an account on our research network, Loop, which will allow you to receive invitations and access your review assignments. We ask that you complete your profile by adding a photo, a brief bio, and a list of your publications.

To add publications to your Loop profile, visit the relevant tab and go through the suggested list and confirm/reject records, as needed.
From your loop profile you will gain access to My Frontiers (1). My Frontiers is an interface that allows all Submissions, Review and Editing assignments, as well as other useful information, to be viewed in one place. My Frontiers can be accessed in the top-right corner of your browser after logging in.

Once clicking on My Frontiers, by selecting Tabs I can view in one place:

- All My Submissions and where they are in the Review Process
- My Editing Assignments
- My Inbox
- My Invoices
- Useful information for my Editor Role(s)
2.2 REVIEW MANUSCRIPTS

The primary role of Review Editors is to act as reviewers in the peer-review of submitted manuscripts.

Along with Associate Editors, Review Editors (including yourself) are the key persons of the Frontiers review process, since they are responsible for certifying the validity and accuracy of publications, and for helping authors to improve the quality of their manuscripts as well as the way in which the research is communicated.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A REVIEWER

The mandate for reviewers is to:

● ensure that experiments and studies were conducted correctly, taking into account appropriate ethical considerations,
● and that the conclusions are based on a valid, logical interpretation of the results.

Reviewers are obliged to:

● keep all manuscript files and review reports confidential. These should only be shared with the authors and the handling editor of the manuscript in the review forum. Posting of the review report publicly is prohibited.
● refrain from disclosing their identity to the authors and other reviewer(s) until after completing the review process.
● refrain from using inappropriate language and unconstructive behavior. This will not be tolerated and may result in a reviewer being revoked from the assignment and, in more serious cases, from the editorial board.
● ensure a timely review by completing their assignment as soon as possible and by notifying the handling editor and Editorial Office of any expected delays immediately.

Please see additional guidelines for reviewers issued by the Committee on Publication Ethics, that detail further ethical obligations of reviewers, here.

2.3 CONTRIBUTE TO THE SECTION’S EDITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Although this is not compulsory, you are also encouraged to be an active member of the editorial board and contribute to the success of the specialty by:

• Submitting your own manuscripts on a regular basis;
• Suggesting or/and co-editing a Research Topic article collection
• Promoting Frontiers to your peers and colleagues.

CONSIDER ORGANIZING A RESEARCH TOPIC

Frontiers Research Topics are collections of ideally at least 10 articles on a focused research area. They create an online dialogue between many research groups about their latest advances, methods, ideas, and more. They are a great opportunity to highlight your research focus, intensify collaboration, and drive the next developments in your field.

The organization of Research Topics resembles the format of a conference, with researcher-proposed topics and abstract submissions for proposed contributions. They result in an encyclopedic collection of peer-reviewed articles available to everyone both online and as a free, downloadable e-book (see here for an example).
We recommend that Research Topics be hosted by a minimum of two Topic Editors with previous editing experience, who may be assisted by an Associate Editor from the editorial board if deemed appropriate by the Specialty Chief Editor. Topic Editors are responsible for soliciting contributions from their peers (although submissions are open to all), for selecting contributions based on abstract submissions, as well as for overseeing the review process of submitted manuscripts by acting as the handling editors.

Feel free to contact us with any ideas you have for potential Research Topics, including those that could be hosted by other experts in the field. Research Topic proposals will need to be approved by the Specialty Chief Editor of the relevant specialty.

3. THE FRONTIERS REVIEW PROCESS

The Frontiers collaborative review process has been designed to validate high-quality scholarly contributions by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Associate Editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles.

As shown below the review process is composed of seven stages: Initial Validation, Editorial Assignment, Independent Review, Interactive Review, Review Finalized, Final Validation and Final Decision. Review Editors join the process at the stage of the Independent Review and follow discussions with authors through Interactive Review till they are ready to make their final decision.

In the following sections each stage of the review process is outlined in further detail.
3.1 INITIAL VALIDATION

To support you in ensuring the quality of the articles, all submissions undergo standard initial checks by the Research Integrity team. All submissions are pre-screened for:

- Textual overlap with and similarity to published material.
- Potential image or data manipulation.
- Language Quality;
- Adherence to editorial policies
- Adherence to ethical standards;
- Potential conflicts of interest.

More information on the Frontiers Research Integrity policies can be found at the following link: [https://www.frontiersin.org/about/author-guidelines](https://www.frontiersin.org/about/author-guidelines)

A webinar explaining the activities of our Research Integrity team is also available: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) | [BiliBili](https://www.bilibili.com).

Following completion of these initial checks, the manuscripts are sent to a relevant Associate Editor on the board.

3.2 AIRA – ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVIEW ASSISTANT

Frontiers peer review incorporates powerful AI technology to safeguard both manuscript and peer-review quality more efficiently. AIRA assists editors, reviewers, and internal teams by analyzing, interpreting, and communicating the quality of submitted manuscripts.

Its algorithms quickly and accurately evaluate submitted manuscripts against a set of quality measures, including:

1) Ethics guidelines
2) The presence of human images
3) Text overlap
4) Language quality
5) Scope verification
6) Duplicate submissions
7) Controversial topics
8) Commercial Conflicts
9) Data Availability verification
You can access AIRA by clicking the AIRA tab (1). For more information on the AIRA quality checks, you can “Click here” (2) which will direct you to our Knowledge Hub.

You will be able to see the checks performed by AIRA and marked as **CHECKED** when AIRA did not identify an issue and the manuscript is ready to proceed to review.

The check will be marked as **ONGOING**, when AIRA has identified a problem in the manuscript and the Editorial Office is investigating on this (4), or when the manuscript needs to be manually checked and might need improvements (5).

If you identify an issue in the manuscript regarding the quality checks, you can communicate this to the authors and ensure that the concerns will be addressed during review. For major concerns, please contact the Editorial Office.
3.3 EDITORIAL ASSIGNMENT - INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Once an Associate Editor has accepted to handle the review of a manuscript, it is subjected to an initial assessment- an editor may either decide to send the manuscript out for review or recommend it for immediate rejection to the Specialty Chief Editor. Manuscripts may only be rejected without peer-review for the following reasons:

- An objective error (i.e. an error that is generally recognized by the community);
- Language errors that render the research incomprehensible;
- Substantially below standard research quality;
- Lack of appropriate ethical considerations and/or non-compliance with ethical standards.

Should the manuscript be suitable for review, the handling editor will be asked to secure reviewers (minimum of 2 for the full-length article types, but they may of course assign more), either selected from the editorial board or invited externally among experts in the field. If reviewers have not been assigned within 7 days, invitations will be sent to the most relevant Review Editors from the editorial board. The following sections will explain step by step what how to proceed in the next stages of the peer-review process, once you get invited to review a manuscript. Here we are.
3.4 DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

When accepting a review invitation, you will be requested to fill out the acceptance questionnaire (shown below) to confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest (COI) which may prevent you from completing your review assignment.

If you have nothing to declare, you will be able to accept the assignment and gain access to the manuscript straight away. Should you need to declare a relationship with the handling editor or any of the authors your ability to accept the assignment yourself will be disabled and you will be asked to contact the Editorial Office to elaborate on your relationship. If the relationship is deemed permissible the Editorial Office will be able to assign you directly as reviewer for the manuscript.
NOTE: Review Editors should not accept assignments if they have a close professional relationship with the handling editor, which in their view could affect the objectivity of the review.

Actual or potential conflicts of interest must be reported both to the journal’s Editorial Office and to the handling editor of the manuscript. Further details on the information that needs to be disclosed can be seen in the table below. In case of doubt, please contact the Frontiers Editorial Office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>1. Are any of the authors a spouse or significant other, a member of the same family or a very close personal friend? Review Editors should also not be a member of the same family as the handling editor.</th>
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| COLLABORATIONS | 2. Are you currently hosting or have hosted a Frontiers Research Topic with any of the authors within the past 2 years? Are you currently hosting a Frontiers Research Topic with the Editor?  
3. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated on a research project or a publication with any of the authors within the past 2 years?  
4. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as an advisor or in any other direct supervisory capacity in the past five years?  
5. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as a student or in any other direct subordinate capacity in the past five years? |
| AFFILIATION | 6. Are you affiliated with the same institution as the editor? Are you affiliated with the same institution as any of the authors? If so, has this resulted in interactions, collaborations, or mutual interests with the authors that would compromise your impartiality in conducting this review?  
7. Are you a current member of a committee or department that coincides with an affiliation with the editor or any of the authors? |
| FINANCIAL | 8. Do you have a business or professional partnership with any author?  
9. Do you have financial interests or business relations with any organization involved in this research or in the preparation of the manuscript?  
10. Do you have any financial interest in the content of the manuscript that might affect your ability to perform an objective review? |
3.5 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PHASE

Upon assignment you will get access to the Review Forum to download the manuscript and all related files as well as to provide your online review report structured into a questionnaire, which varies based on the article type. You are requested to complete this task as soon as possible, and **no later than 7 days after accepting the assignment**. Your constructive comments will provide authors with valuable feedback in order to improve their manuscript.

Should you be unable to complete your assignment within the 7 days, a deadline extension can be granted. Please see section 3.9 for more information.

NOTE: Your review assignments and pending tasks are displayed in the MyFrontiers dashboard accessible from the top navigation bar once you log in.
The image below shows the review forum. On the right-hand side, you will find options to:

1. Download the latest version of the manuscript (1);
2. Access all related files (2);
3. Withdraw from the process, should you not have time to continue the review or should there be a conflict of interest (3);
4. Recommend it for rejection to the handling editor should you find any objective error in the manuscript (4).

To submit your independent review report, visit the review forum and fill out the relevant sections (see screenshot below). The independent review report questionnaire is comprised of a number of questions and a checklist specifically designed for each article type (Original Research, Methods, etc.) as well as a section to assess the quality of the manuscript.
You may select the “Save and Resume Later” option (1) at any stage, should you still be drafting. Once the review report is ready, simply press “Submit My Report” at the top (2), so that your comments may be sent to the handling Associate Editor. If needed, you can still make changes to your report after it has been submitted, up until the Interactive Review Forum is activated by the handling Associate Editor.

During review, you will also have the option to submit PDF files to complement your review (3). One file per question can be submitted. Please note that these files are not meant to replace the review report, but can of great use should you wish to comment on a figure or highlight specific sections of the manuscript.

Once you have completed the report, you will be able to provide a recommendation to the editor:

- Manuscript can be accepted
- Revision is required
- Substantial revision is required

Should you recommend that the manuscript can be accepted, you will have the option to directly endorse the manuscript and finalize your review report. You can read more on what endorsing means in the section *Endorsing for publication*.

Should the handling editor want the authors to directly respond to you in the Review Forum, they are still able to reactivate your review, where your report will become active and will then need to re-confirm your endorsement following the author’s response.
Once all reviewers have submitted their reports, the Associate Editor will be automatically notified to activate the next phase of the review, the interactive review, which will provide authors and reviewers access to all review reports and any comments posted in the Editor tab. The handling editor can choose to activate the review indicating minor, moderate or substantial revisions are needed. The revision level is reflected in the amount of days the authors are given to prepare their responses and revision (7, 14 or 21 days).

Alternatively, the handling editor can recommend rejection based on your or other reviewer(s)’ comments by activating the interactive review with major concerns. This provides the authors with 7 days to prepare a rebuttal. Should the handling editor choose this route, you will be revoked from the assignment. In case your expertise is needed, the handling editor may contact you following the authors rebuttal.

### 3.6 THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW PHASE

Once the interactive review forum is activated, authors are automatically notified to enter the review forum, where they can access the submitted reports, and have up to 30 days to address them and/or resubmit a revised manuscript, if necessary.

Once the authors have responded, you will be automatically notified and will be asked to visit the review forum within 7 days. You will be able to interact with the authors, other reviewer(s) and the Associate Editor through comments in the discussion forum. At this stage all reviewers’ reports and comments posted by Associate Editor in the Editor tab will be visible to the authors and to the other Review Editor(s), enabling further discussion and clarification.
The handling Associate Editor monitors the process to ensure the timeliness of the review and the constructiveness of the comments. Author unresponsiveness or disputes over manuscript content should be reported to both the Editorial Office (for more information on relevant contact details, please see Section 4) and the handling Associate Editor.

Should a dispute arise, the Associate Editor will act as a mediator, working with all parties involved to resolve the issue. The review is complete once all issues/comments are addressed to the reviewers’ satisfaction.

You can contact the Associate Editor directly through the review forum by selecting the blue envelope sign next to their name (see screenshot below).
3.7 MAKING A FINAL DECISION

When you are ready to make your final decision, please consider the following points:

- Has the final manuscript been submitted?
- Does the manuscript propose a suitable research question and hypothesis, supported by relevant theory?
- Do the authors apply a correct and transparent methodology?
- Is the study design and materials clearly laid out?
- Is the language and presentation clear and adequate?
- Are figures and tables in line with scientific norms and standards?
- Do the authors follow Frontiers author guidelines on editorial and ethical policies?
- Is the manuscript grounded in existing literature through sufficient referencing and does it offer an appropriate coverage of the relevant literature?

You then have the option to:

- Endorse the manuscript for publication: Should you have no further comments
- Withdraw from the review: Should you no longer wish to / be able to take part in the review
- Recommend rejection to the handling editor: Should the authors be unable or unwilling to address your comments
**Endorsing for publication**

Should you endorse the manuscript for publication, you confirm that your comments have been adequately addressed by the authors. If manuscript is not yet in a publishable form, please do not endorse the manuscript.

You will be able to provide the authors with any final comments you may have. Please note that your final comments should not contain any issues that have yet to be addressed by the authors.

When finalizing your review, you will also be asked to confirm that you agree to your name and affiliation being disclosed on the article, if published.

The handling editor will be notified of your endorsement and is able to accept the manuscript at the end of the process, if appropriate. Manuscripts may only be accepted for publication once the required number of reviewers have endorsed publication, should no further reviews be pending.
**Withdrawing and/or recommending rejection**

Should you recommend rejection of a manuscript, you will remain anonymous and your recommendation will be sent to the handling editor, who will be able to either forward this recommendation to the Specialty Chief Editor. Should the handling editor choose to continue review following your withdrawal and/or recommendation other reviewers may be assigned and your report remain available in the forum.
When withdrawing/recommending rejection, you will be asked to select the reason for your decision from a list (see screenshots below). While this is not mandatory, you are also encouraged to provide the handling editor with further comments. The reasons given will be visible to the Associate Editor, Chief Editors, and Editorial Office, but will not be available to the authors.
3.8 **FINAL VALIDATION**

Accepted manuscripts undergo a final quality check by the Editorial Office. Once approved from the Editorial Office the abstract will be published online immediately and the full manuscript will move on to typesetting.

3.9 **REQUESTING AN EXTENSION**

While the Frontiers platform has been designed to ensure a thorough yet rapid review process, to enable a true discussion between authors and reviewers, you may request extensions at any stage, should you need more time to complete a review.

- During the review, extensions may be self-granted once during the independent review and once during the interactive review. This is done by selecting the corresponding option in the right-hand side menu of the review forum, once it becomes available. If any additional extensions are needed please contact the Editorial Office.

- Short extensions can also be requested by sending an email to the Editorial Office, who will be able to update the system accordingly.

- Additional or longer extensions may be requested by contacting the Editorial Office, keeping in mind that requests for long extensions will have to be confirmed by the handling editor as well.

4. **CONTACT DETAILS**

**Editorial Office**

[journal].editorial.office@frontiersin.org

For example: neuroscience.editorial.office@frontiersin.org
plantscience.editorial.office@frontiersin.org

to reach Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology please use the following:
cellandinfect.editorial.office@frontiersin.org

**Research Integrity**

researchintegrity@frontiersin.org