Review Editor Guidelines

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. If you are unsure of how to reach them, you can email the general Editorial Office at editorial.office@frontiersin.org.
Important changes in last update

| Section 4.2 | Upon accepting a review invitation, you will have 15 days to submit an independent review report via the online review forum. |
1. ABOUT FRONTIERS 4
2. FRONTIERS EDITORIAL BOARDS 4

3. YOUR ROLE AS REVIEW EDITOR 5
3.1 Complete your Frontiers profile on Loop 5
3.2 Your role in peer review 6

4. THE FRONTIERS REVIEW PROCESS 6
4.1 Submission and initial evaluation 7
4.2 The independent review phase 7
4.3 The interactive review phase 9
4.4 Manuscript acceptance/rejection 11
4.5 Your responsibilities as a reviewer 12
4.6 Requesting an extension 13
4.7 Conflicts of interest 13

5. SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS TO FRONTIERS AS A REVIEW EDITOR 15
5.1 Review Editor discount 15
5.2 Institutional agreements 15

6. CONSIDER ORGANIZING A RESEARCH TOPIC 15
1. ABOUT FRONTIERS

Frontiers is a leading open-access publisher. Established in 2007, Frontiers drives innovations in peer-review, post-publication review, impact metrics, and transparent academic profiles, and provides an ecosystem of open-science tools.

Frontiers stands for the following fundamental principles:

- **Fair, fast, rigorous, and transparent peer-review** – A uniquely interactive and collaborative process in real time between authors and reviewers. Reviewers are acknowledged on published papers in recognition of their important contribution, as well as to safeguard transparency.

- **Community-driven** – Frontiers Journals are rooted in academic communities and are run by world-renowned researchers and scholars. Our Loop network provides a personalized data stream for each user, targeting articles to the right readership and maximizing impact.

- **Tier-climbing and impact-neutral publishing** – Papers are accepted based on objective criteria, not potential impact; the latter being evaluated by the community post-publication, through article-level impact analytics that track the number of views, downloads, and demographics of readers, as well as the “buzz” on social media and science blogs. Crowdsourcing algorithms democratically select the most important studies to showcase to a broader readership as Tier-climbing papers.

- **Open-access and unrestricted global visibility** – Articles are published under the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY), visible to search engines, and can be accessed, distributed, and reused by anyone for free, with appropriate citation.

- **Below average publishing fees and fair distribution of the resources** – For articles to be freely available upon publication, they are subject to a publishing fee (available on a journal basis). Through our waiver program, we strive to ensure that publishing fees do not become an obstacle. Review Editors receive a 15% discount on all Category A article types submitted no later than three months after their appointment to the board or following the completion of a review assignment. There are no charges for color figures or supplementary material.

- **Strong IT focus** – Our web platform is designed in-house, evolving according to constant feedback from users in order to improve the accountability, efficiency, quality, fairness, and impact of scholarly publishing.

2. FRONTIERS EDITORIAL BOARDS

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.

N.B.: 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.

3. YOUR ROLE AS REVIEW EDITOR

3.1 COMPLETE YOUR FRONTIERS PROFILE 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 would now ask you to please complete your profile within one or two weeks by adding a photo, a brief bio, as well as a few specific keywords related to your expertise. These will be important to help ensure that you receive the most appropriate review invitations. To update your keywords, please visit your Loop profile and fill out the Expertise brick in the right hand side menu.

Examples of good keywords: 5-HTTLPR, serotonin transporter gene, serotonin, neurotransmitter reuptake, mood, depression, mouse models

Examples of vague keywords: brain, genetics, cell biology, neuroscience, psychology, physiology

Please also take a moment to confirm your publications (see screenshot below).
3.2 YOUR ROLE IN PEER REVIEW

The primary role of Review Editors is to act as reviewers in the peer review of submitted manuscripts. 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;
- Promoting Frontiers to your peers and colleagues.

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 research as well as the way in which the research is communicated. In recognition of their contribution during the peer-review process, Review Editors who have endorsed a manuscript are always acknowledged publicly, with their names and affiliations, on the published article. In contrast, Review Editors who do not endorse a manuscript remain anonymous.

4. THE FRONTIERS PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

The Frontiers collaborative review process has been designed to optimize the quality of published articles by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Associate Editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles.

1 See Section 5 for discounts and other offers available in this regard.
4.1 SUBMISSION AND INITIAL EVALUATION

Submitted manuscripts are subjected to an initial assessment by the handling Associate Editor, who 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 Associate Editor will be asked to secure reviewers (minimum 1-2, depending on the article type, but they may of course assign more), either selected from the editorial board or invited externally among experts in the area. If the reviewers have not been assigned within 7 days, invitations will be sent to the most relevant Review Editors from the editorial board (selected using a keyword-matching algorithm).

4.2 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PHASE

Upon accepting a review invitation, you will have 15 days to submit an independent review report via the online review forum. The review report is structured into a questionnaire, which varies based on the article type, to guide you through your assessment. Your review assignments and pending tasks are displayed on the right hand side of your Loop homepage (1). They may also be accessed by selecting Frontiers > My Review Assignments (2).
The image below shows the review forum. On the right hand side, you will find options to:

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

Once a review invitation has been accepted, please complete the independent review report as soon as possible, and no later than 15 days after accepting the assignment. Your constructive comments will provide authors with valuable feedback in order to improve their manuscript.

To submit your independent review report, visit the review forum and fill out the relevant boxes (see screenshot below). 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 the independent review phase, you assess the paper independently from other reviewers and from the authors. The Associate Editor is automatically notified as soon as your independent review report is submitted. Once reviewers have submitted their reports, the Associate Editor is responsible for activating the next phase of the review, i.e. the interactive review forum. Even if the comments 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.

**4.3 THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW PHASE**

Once the interactive review forum is activated, authors are immediately notified to enter the review forum, where they are able to view the review comments, and have up to 35 days to prepare responses and/or a revised manuscript, if necessary. You will be notified by email as soon as the authors have responded to your comments and will be asked to visit the review forum within 8 days to:

- Endorse publication of the manuscript, should you have no further comments (1);
- Continue your discussion with the authors, should there be pending issues (2);
- Withdraw your participation from the process or recommend the manuscript for rejection, should the authors be unable or unwilling to address your comments or should you become unavailable.
You can interact with the authors and other reviewer(s) through real-time comments in the discussion forum. The handling Associate Editor monitors the discussions to ensure the timeliness and constructiveness of the review. Issues such as problematic authors or lengthening disputes over manuscript content should be reported to the handling Associate Editor, either through the review forum or by selecting the blue envelope sign next to their name (see screenshot below).

Should a dispute arise, the 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.

4.4 MANUSCRIPT ACCEPTANCE/REJECTION

Should you recommend rejection of a manuscript, you will remain anonymous and your recommendation will be sent to the handling Associate Editor, who will be able to either forward this recommendation to the Specialty Chief Editor, or to assign a new reviewer. Your report and any additional comments you may have posted in the forum will remain available. When withdrawing/recommending rejection, you will be asked to select the reason for your decision from a list (see screenshot below). While this is not mandatory, you are also encouraged to provide the handling Associate 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.

Alternatively, you may endorse a manuscript for publication, thereby indicating that your comments have been adequately addressed by the authors. When finalizing your review, you will be asked to confirm that you agree to your name being disclosed on the article, if published, and will be able to provide the authors with any final comments you may have.
The handling Associate 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. Accepted manuscripts undergo a final technical check by the Editorial Office prior to typesetting.

4.5 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 sound, logical interpretation of the results. The wider significance of manuscripts is evaluated post-publication and demonstrated through our article-level metrics. Reviewers are obliged to keep all manuscript files confidential and to delete all records after completing the review process. The review reports are also confidential and may only be shared with the authors and the handling Associate Editor of the manuscript in the review forum. Posting of the review report publically is prohibited. Inappropriate language and unconstructive behavior will not be tolerated in the review forum and may result in a reviewer being revoked from the assignment and, in more serious cases, from the editorial board. Please also ensure a timely review by completing your
assignment as soon as possible and by notifying the handling Associate Editor and Editorial Office of any expected delays immediately. Please see additional guidelines for reviewers issued by the Committee on Publication Ethics, here.

### 4.6 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 independent review phase, extensions may be requested by sending an email to the Editorial Office, who will be able to update the system accordingly;
- During the interactive review phase, extensions may be requested by contacting the Editorial Office or by selecting the corresponding option in the right hand side menu of the review forum, once it becomes available. Requests for long extensions will have to be confirmed by the handling Associate Editor as well.

### 4.7 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

When accepting a review invitation, you are requested to confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest (see details below).
### FAMILY
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.

### 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?

   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.

### 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?
Actual or potential conflicts of interest must be reported both to the journal’s Editorial Office and to the handling Associate Editor of the manuscript.
In case of doubt, please contact the Frontiers Editorial Office at editorial.office@frontiersin.org.

5. SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS TO FRONTIERS AS A REVIEW EDITOR

5.1 REVIEW EDITOR DISCOUNT

To acknowledge your contribution to the journal as a Review Editor, you receive a 15% discount on Category A article types submitted to any Frontiers journal. This offer is valid for three months after joining the board and for three months after each completed review, so long as you are listed as one of the corresponding authors. Use the code RE-DISCOUNT-[your last name] in the submission system under “Payment Details – Reference”. Please note that Review Editor and Research Topic reductions are non-cumulative.

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENTS

In an effort to strengthen our connection with the research communities we serve and to centralize communications, Frontiers is working with libraries, funding agencies, and research consortiums to find ways to support researchers and scholars directly. These agreements enable us to remove some or all of the responsibility for article publishing fees from individual authors.
For a list of the institutions with which we currently have an institutional agreement, click here. You can also recommend Frontiers to your library by clicking here.

6. 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 a research focus or a conference, 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.