Guide to finding Peer Reviewers

We acknowledge that finding reviewers is the hardest task for you as a manuscript handling editor, so hopefully this guide can help.

You need to find reviewers with the right expertise to assess a submitted article. They also need to be willing to write the review to a deadline. This can limit the pool immediately, particularly in niche research fields, but on top of that you also have to ask:

- Does the reviewer have any indicators of potential conflicts of interest?
- Is the reviewer independent of any other agreed reviewers?
- Is the reviewer selection for an article diverse enough (based on gender, location, career stage, and so on)?
- Have you asked this reviewer too many times? When the same reviewer is repeatedly called upon to carry out peer review, they can get 'reviewer fatigue'.

Editors often now have to find **ten or more qualified potential reviewers** to secure just a couple of reviews. Hopefully the following simple steps can help you secure these reviewers quickly.

Finding peer reviewers – our top tips

1. Check the references in the article

The reference section of a submitted article is an excellent place to start when looking for peer reviewers.

But beware of conflicts of interest, as authors may have cited colleagues or collaborators.

2. Use search tools and databases to find researchers working on similar topics

There are a number of different search tools and resources you can use to find reviewers. Here are the key ones:

The Web of Science *Reviewer Locator tool on ScholarOne*

When an author submits an article, the Reviewer Locator searches for reviewers based on the manuscript's keywords and abstract. You can set your search preferences on ScholarOne to ensure that searches give you the information you need to efficiently select reviewers.

JANE

This tool allows you to search for researchers based on keywords. It works by trawling through the millions of articles and documents on PubMed to find the most relevant authors to fit your search.

Web of Science

This powerful tool allows you to view authors based on number of publications by subject, helping you to find potential reviewers with the right experience for the article you're working on.

3. Use the journal's editorial board

Our **editorial board** is a great source for both reviews and reviewer recommendations.

- **Invite editorial board members to review articles** based on their subject specialism.
- **Ask a colleague for suggestions.**

4. Consider previous authors and guest editors

As the journal grows this will become an excellent source for potential reviewers. Authors of previously published articles and journal guest editors could be just what you're looking for in a reviewer. So don't forget to search the previous published work for the subject you're interested in.

5. Ask reviewers who decline for suggestions

Invited reviewers decline to review for a number of reasons, but that doesn't mean they can't still help you find alternatives. We have added a request to 'suggest appropriate alternative reviewers' into our initial invitation to review, to make it clear upfront how they can help you.

6. Use keywords

Keywords are part of the article submission process. When submitting an article, authors are asked to add keywords that describe their research.

Once you have the keywords for a newly submitted article, you can search using the journal's own database, or the tools discussed above, to find appropriate reviewers that match the relevant keywords.

7. Use previous reviewers

Previous reviewers are, of course, obvious people to go to when you need new reviews.

The main thing to be aware of when using this approach is ensuring that you don't ask the **same people too often** – something that can happen all too easily, particularly in niche subject areas. Reviewer fatigue could prompt a previously engaged reviewer to switch off from your requests, so be mindful when approaching your existing reviewer pool.

8. Use your personal network

Your personal network is bound to include researchers from relevant subject areas for this journal, who could make excellent reviewers. The added bonus with your personal network is that the people in it are likely to be more open to an approach – and more likely to suggest alternatives if they can't help themselves. Think about who you work with now, previous co-authors, people you've met at academic conferences, or industry events, old colleagues, or mentees/mentors. **Consider sending them a personal email once the invites from the system have gone out, so they know it comes from you.**

9. Consider using early career researchers or junior colleagues

Researchers who are earlier in their careers need to build their experience in reviewing articles. They're also less likely to be inundated with requests, and therefore more likely to have the capacity to help. However, it's important to bear in mind they might need **mentoring or formal training** – particularly if it's their first time carrying out peer review. It may be that they need your help in what they should focus on. Again, consider sending a personal email, and our Results and Analysis papers peer review reports already go a long way to guide reviewers.

Growing our reviewer pool

It's important to keep growing the journal's reviewer pool. Not only will this help you find reviewers faster, it'll also ensure you're not always leaning on the same people. Some simple ways to do this include:

- We have added a **call for reviewers** banner on our journal homepage.
- We have also added **why be a peer reviewer** to the journal website and the invitation emails.
- **Networking at conferences** – conference speakers and presenters are great people to approach as potential reviewers. Consider inviting people as authors AND reviewers.
- Engage early career researchers in your network, which will increase the diversity of our reviewer pool.