



Rejection and Revision



Rejection

1. When rejected, try again

- Even Nobel Laureates get rejection letters.
- Papers lying dormant in the file drawer do not bring any good news!
- Submit the paper to another journal within one month. But wait!
- If a referee points out a major problem, you need to address it.
- You do not have to revise a paper every time it is rejected.
- But if a paper is rejected 4 times, there is a serious flaw in the paper. Find and fix the problem.
- Make a modest effort to incorporate the valuable suggestions of the referee before submitting to another journal.
- Why? The same referee might get it again.
- Do whatever possible to make sure the negative referee does not get the paper again. You are entitled to new referee reports.

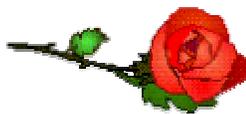
2. If a "stupid" referee misunderstood your paper, it is your fault

- Truth hurts sometimes, but listen anyway.
- Some referees spend as little as 15 minutes reading your paper. Your paper should be clearly presented, and it should be comprehensible by such referees.
- The typical referee spends two hours or more on your paper. Moreover, he/she is an expert in the field. Find out why such an expert has trouble understanding your paper and correct the problems.
- This "stupid" referee problem will not disappear until you correct it.

- There must be something valuable in those reports. Salvage and incorporate them freely in your paper. (And you do not have to thank them.) This is not plagiarism.

3. Do not get angry

- Do not brood over ways to get even with the referees or the editor. Your energy then would be devoted to a counterproductive and unhappy task.
- Writing a rebuttal letter to the editor rarely reverses the decision. The referee has to defend it, even if it was a bad report.
- The editor already has a stack of such complaints. One more is not likely to change the editor's decision, albeit there are exceptions.
- When the referee successfully defends the report (in the eyes of the editor), you lose any capital you may have accumulated.
- Write only if it is a simple matter.
- Instead of trying to prove that the referee is wrong on several points, explain why you might deserve a second or third opinion.
- Example: argue that there is no mathematical error, contrary to the report.



Revision

- There might be a time limit for resubmission, usually six months to a year from the date of the invitation letter.
- If you do not intend to revise and resubmit the paper for whatever reason, let the editorial office know of your intention (via e-mail/fax).
- Remember that for all practical purposes this is probably your **last** chance to revise the paper. The probability that you will succeed is about 50%, depending on the journals. Sloppy, rough revisions will surely result in rejection. The editorial office will not continue to provide mediation

between the referees and authors because there are other papers demanding attention.

- You received an invitation to revise the paper because it might contain a publishable idea. However, papers will not be accepted unless they are presentable and polished enough for publication.

4. Be optimistic and get excited

- Don't blow it. (If you do, you may wait three more years to get another favorable letter.)
- Take the time to do a good job. The goal is to ensure acceptance, not to minimize the effort.
- Do not save your effort. Go the extra mile. You have a chance (about 50%).

5. Write a detailed response to individual referees

- Take every comment of the referee seriously.
- In a note to be transmitted to the referee, first thank him or her.
- Number all relevant comments and respond to those (explain what you did in the revised paper).
- Indicate that you are doing everything possible and more.
- If you cannot accommodate the demands, thank the referee for the suggestion, but offer explanations why they are beyond the scope of the paper or why it is not possible at the time.

6. Do not attack referees

- Generally, it is not a good idea to berate the reviewers. Don't lash out at the referees.
- Although they may not have a favorable opinion of your paper, they took the time to read your paper!
- Do not say: "The referee's idea is bad, but mine is good."
- Better to say, the referee has an interesting notion, but the proposed idea is also good, particularly in light of this or that fact.

- If the referee makes a valid point (you can almost always find conditions under which the referee's points are valid), explain why, due to this or that difficulty, you are not pursuing that course in the paper.

7. Resubmit the revised paper within three months

- Remember that this invitation is based on reports by some referees who had good first impressions about your paper. Do not wait until that positive aura vanishes.
- Do not resubmit the revised version in one month, even if you worked on it full time.
- If you do, the editor may think that you have not devoted a sufficient amount of time to the revision.

8. Write just one paragraph a day if you hate to revise

- The referees or editors have asked you to do an impossible or dreadful task. Then just write one paragraph a day. You can do that!
- This works when you know you can do it, you should do it, but you cannot get excited. The situation requires careful self-inducement.
- As you write a little bit at a time, before you know it, you get fired up.

9. Listen to what the editor says

- It is important to glean the true message from the editor's letter.
- Do not try to bargain with the editor (unless he/she starts it).
- Share the editor's letter and referee reports with experienced colleagues. They may have surprisingly different interpretations.



Resubmission

When your revision is completed, you should send the following to the editor:

- copies of the paper (as many as requested)
- cover letter

- packet for each referee.

10. Check the Revised Paper

- The cover page should contain complete contact information about the author: (i) address, (ii) telephone and fax numbers, and (iii) e-mail address. This allows the editorial office to contact you quickly should the need arise. If you anticipate moving, provide your forwarding postal and e-mail addresses.
- The cover page of the revised paper should include the current date (or month and year) of revision; you do not want the office to send an old version to the referees by mistake.
- If there were any complaints about the writing style, try to get some editorial assistance. Remember that many papers are rejected because of writing style problems.
- Eliminate typographical errors in the cover page and the abstract. This is an absolute minimum courtesy.
- Last, but not least, make sure that there are no pages **missing** in any of the copies.

Cover Letter

11. Explain succinctly how you revised the paper

- The purpose is to convince the editor that he or she should not send the paper back to the referees.
- If the editor already indicated that he or she would send the paper back to the referees, then your letter also should explain how well you followed the suggestions of the referees.

Referee's Packet

12. Prepare a packet for each referee

- Regardless of whether the editorial office is well-managed or not, you should prepare a packet for each referee. Each packet must include everything a referee might possibly need. Specifically,
 - A copy of the original (or latest) report. The referee might have lost the file or might not remember even vaguely what he/she asked you to do. A copy of the report not only helps the referee remember what he/she said about your paper, but it also constrains the referee not to deviate too much from the earlier report. The editorial office also has copies, but you want to ensure acceptance even when the office is not well staffed.
 - A copy of the revised version. Make sure you have responded to every comment of the referee.
 - A response to the referee's report. Do not forget to thank the referee. Explain what you did or did not do in response to every comment.
 - If the referee said something which you and the other referee did not agree on, include a common response to the referees. This might calm down the problem referee.
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