

## Editorial

# Some Basics for Answering to Reviewers' Comments

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### 1. Mental preparation

It is worth mentioning that rarely it happens that a paper is accepted as such after its submission. So you have to expect that you will have to revise your manuscript, so do not expect your paper to be accepted at its first submission. It should be kept in mind that the suggestions are meant to improve your manuscript scientifically and technically. Mentally you have to prepare yourself at the following points;

- It does not guarantee that a paper will be accepted for publication once it is revised, may be asked for further revision or if poorly responded there are chances to be rejected.
- Comments by the reviewers are always to improve your writing both scientifically and technically, so do not take comments by the reviewers personally, in fact, become perspective so that your responses are not self-justifying and marked with anger.
- Review process is not argumentative, in fact journal editorial board and reviewers wish to see good scientifically sound work get published. So develop a consensus, take your time at least a few days to plan before beginning to respond.
- Always remember “Reviews typically make manuscripts better!” to make a sense of how to publish a good scientific knowledge.

### 2. Answering approach

You have to remember that this is your manuscript ultimately and you have to take obligation for what you choose to submit, but the editor makes the final decision! However, some better answering approach could favor your way;

- You should follow the time limits given by the editorial office and answer in a timely manner. In case you need additional time to make changes or add data accordingly, or even you wish to talk about the biased reviewers or unprofessional comments, you must with the editor, stating the appropriate reasons.
- Now it's time to address point to point comments by the reviewers, be specific towards suggested changes.
- Once finished with answering, ask a co-author preferably to check that your response is proper, unbiased and professional to the comments
- If you disagree with any of the comments or suggestion, include evidence with your argument. Remember conflicting is common and acceptable but you must be professional and stand your ground, become perspective so that your responses are not self-justifying and marked with anger. In case, if reviewers conflict, choose the most valid comment and explain your decision to editor.
- If the change suggested was already in the paper, state that you “highlighted” what the reviewer requested.
- In case two or more reviewers have suggested or have similar comments, you should give extra attention to such comment.

- In case of misunderstanding of your words or sentences, re-evaluate the words or sentences and re-phrase with some sound words and sentences.
- If reviewers have directly questioned your paper methodology, you are left with two options; (a) consider whether revising your methods will make your study more meaningful, if yes then consider this option (b) if changing your methods is not an option, consider sending to another journal.
- If reviewers have asked for complete re-writing of the manuscript, again you have to adapt from the two options (a) is re-write useful to your study versus the convenience of submitting somewhere else (b) If the statement to re-write the whole paper is without thoughtful reasoning, consider submitting somewhere else.
- In case you have not followed the style, grammar, figures, references style of a particular journal, and you advised to incorporate changes, then consulting journal formatting guidelines and chain of command will help to manage such questions.
- Sometime length of your paper is questioned, you can cut the length, for these ask a colleague to read through and objectively slice out unneeded text. If text is requested to be cut and additions are suggested, note this to the editor in your point to point responses.
- In case of rejection to your submission, appealing a rejection is a poor approach rather (a) consider the time and effort essential to re-format, versus re-think the manuscript itself (b) consider the comments from the rejection for the new submission (c) consider that you might get the same reviewers.

### 3. Answering tactics

The most powerful tactic during your response is to be polite and professional and start responding with a cover letter to the editor and a separate letter addressing the reviewers' comments. Some answering tactics are described here;

- First of all compliment the reviewers (e.g., “thanks for the judicious reflection”), if reviewers are complimentary, then address them with a thank you for their kind response. If reviewers are in error (e.g., they requested something you have already performed) never point out their carelessness; only provide evidence with your argument.
- In the cover letter to the editor, start with a thank you paragraph and thank each reviewer and editor. Comprise a summary of the changes made and separately write a letter addressing reviewer' comments write detailed notes on how you addressed each point. You must consider three things (a) do not simply send a revision with the comment that you have addressed “all” problems and concerns (b) show the changes that were made (e.g. see section 2.1), do not just write “changed” or “edited” (c) describe any extra work you did to overcome the stated problem.
- Next important tactics is structure of letter addressing reviewers' comments. In this respect, give exact copy of each comment by the reviewer along with your response to a comment and further explain the clarifications or revisions which you have addressed in your manuscript. Your way of response should be polite enough possibly you can start with the words e.g. “We agree... we support... we acknowledge” etc. Ascertain the location of changes in the text you have made with page and line numbers (of the original and revised paper) that were changed so that the editor does not have to search to find changes or you can insert the new text in your comments so that the editor/reviewer does not have to go back to the paper to find changes.
- I am hopeful, after following all said strategies you will come up with positive results at the end.

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