

Responding to reviewers: a checklist

Use this checklist to plan your revision, write a clear point-by-point response letter, and check everything is consistent before you resubmit.

Before you start writing

- Read the decision letter and all comments twice, then wait a day before drafting replies.
- Number every comment (R1.1, R1.2, R2.1...) and split comments that contain several requests.
- Sort comments into: quick fixes, substantial revisions, and points you may respectfully disagree with.
- Note the revision deadline, and ask the editor early if you need an extension.
- Check whether the editor has highlighted particular comments as essential.

Structure of the response letter

- A short opening thanking the editor and reviewers, and summarising the main changes.
- Each reviewer in a separate section, with every comment reproduced in full, followed by your response.
- Responses that state what was changed and exactly where (section, page and line numbers of the revised manuscript).
- Quoted revised text in the letter for key changes, so reviewers do not need to search the manuscript.
- A visually distinct format for comments and responses, for example comments in bold and responses in plain text.

Responding to each comment

- Answer every comment, including minor ones. Never leave a comment unaddressed.
- Thank reviewers for useful points, briefly and sincerely, without over-apologising.
- Where you have made a change, describe it specifically rather than writing "done" or "corrected".
- Where a request is not feasible (for example, new data collection), explain why and address it another way, such as a limitation.
- When you disagree, do so politely and with evidence: data, references or clear reasoning.
- When two reviewers conflict, explain which approach you followed and why, and let the editor see both responses.

Consistency checks before resubmission

- Every change described in the letter actually appears in the revised manuscript.
- Page and line numbers in the letter match the final revised file.
- Numbers changed in the text are also updated in the abstract, tables and figures.
- New references are cited in the text and formatted in the reference list.
- A tracked-changes version and a clean version are prepared, if the journal requires both.
- Word limits, figure limits and other journal requirements are still met after revision.
- All co-authors have approved the revised manuscript and the response letter.

Tone that works

- Stay courteous and factual, even with a harsh comment; your reply is read by the editor, who makes the decision.
- Avoid defensive or emotional language, and never criticise the reviewer.
- Keep responses concise: clear, specific replies are easier for reviewers to accept.

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