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How to Become a Good Reviewer

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Outline

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- Characteristics of a good review
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Background

- Academics rely on scholarly publications to secure and further their careers.
- Need to maintain quality of paper evaluations.
- Peer review continues to be the most effective method to evaluate publications.
- Increased paper submission all over the world leads to fatigue if reviewer # is not increased.



How to become a peer reviewer

- Young researchers can talk to supervisors for recommendation to editors.
- Researchers can also contact editors directly.
- Researchers must maintain good publications via ORCID or Google Scholar.
- By publishing/reviewing more top-tier journal papers, your papers published/reviewed are registered in the authors'/reviewers' database automatically.



Characteristics of a good review

- **Fairness and politeness**

Maintains a positive and constructive tone and never make personal remarks about the authors.

- **Opinions about paper**

Checks against review criteria: clearly defined contribution, novelty, contextualized within literature, technically correct, well validated and good writing.

- **Thoroughness and clarity**

Authors and editors expect reviewers to give concrete advice on how the work can be improved.



Accept/Decline a review invitation

- Conflict of interest?
- Expert in the topic concerned?
- Enough time to do a good review considering the deadline?
- If you decide not to review the paper, reply the invitation ASAP and suggest potential reviewers, if any.



Reading a paper

- Scan the paper to get an idea of the work.
Glance title, abstract, keywords, introduction, section layout, figures, tables, conclusion and references to form a sketch of the proposed work. Do the title and abstract describe the work properly?
- Adopt an open mind approach to decide the quality of the contribution.
Read the entire paper by paying attention on the method, ideas and results. Read a second time to organize thoughts and opinions before writing the review. Are the results technically sound and the claims sufficiently supported by the presented data? Is the discussion detailed, logical and easy to understand?
- Check and report any ethical issues.
Plagiarism and redundant publication?



Evaluating the paper

- **Determines the contributions of the paper.**
Present new concepts/ideas; propose innovative solutions for unsolved, realistic or emerging problems; introduce new/potential problems or new applications of technologies; discuss practical implementation of theoretical solutions/concepts or difficulties to apply theoretical solutions to solve practical problems; promote new researches, developments & applications; present/discuss how standards can be applied; and promote improvements to consolidated techniques, etc.
- **Deals with plausible topics and issues.**
- **Fits the journal/conference scope & objectives.**
- **Has similarity with other papers.**

Writing a review for the paper

- Start by writing a summary of the paper.
- Write a concise statement about the novelty, strength, importance and contribution of the work.
- Express general positive/negative opinions about the paper. Be considerate with the authors.
- List down comments, questions and criticism and clearly state whether they are fundamental, suggestion or doubts.
- Summarize clearly positive/negative viewpoints.
- Where possible, provide specific constructive suggestions to improve the paper.
- Indicate whether the manuscript should be accepted without changes, revise, or rejected.
- Sensitive comments such as plagiarism, duplicate publication, serious remarks, can be sent confidentially to Editor only.

Reviewing a revised paper

- Looking for sign that the authors have done a good job to address the reviewers' comments by revising the paper properly and/or explaining why the reviewers' comments have not been addressed, e.g., more work is necessary.
- Although the authors' response is important, most of the explanations must be in the paper.
- The response must be concise – no need to be very long.
- Reviewers should consider both the authors' response to their concerns and the response to the concerns of other reviewers.
- If the authors have put in a sincere effort by clearly explaining the changes, likely the reviewers will accept the paper in their review. Otherwise, another round of review may be needed.



How reviewers benefit from peer reviews

- Build a reputation with the community.
- Become a better researcher.
- Keep us up-to-date with the work of other researchers.
- Allow us to have influence on the community.
- Help the peer reviews work properly.
- Authors who wish to get the paper published have the responsibility to support the community by reviewing papers.



Typical paper reviewing process (1)

- Papers submitted at web portal are subject to admin/EIC screening/rejection.
- If they are not rejected, EIC assigns these papers to Editors based on their expertise.
- Editors typically select 4 - 5 reviewers from the IEEE reviewer/author database to review each paper.
- Reviewers are given 4 weeks to review the paper but can be extended due to their busy schedule or no response by the reviewers.



Typical paper reviewing process (2)

- Editors require inputs from two or more reviewers to make a recommendation to EIC.
- If needed, EIC can override the Editor's recommendation before sending out the final decision letter to authors.
- If papers require revision, authors are given two months to resubmit their revised papers.
- Revision can go on for a few iterations until the paper is accepted/rejected.
- A paper may take 6 months or more to be accepted for a reputable journal publication.

References

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- [2] Enago Academy, “Becoming a Good Peer Reviewer”, Published on 17 March 2022, <https://www.enago.com/academy/becoming-a-good-peer-reviewer/>.



Thank You!

