A review of reviews: How to respond to review reports

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How the process works

1. Author(s) submit a paper
2. Editor or assistant checks for compliance with journal requirements
3. Editor-in-Chief reads paper to decide:
   Â whether to send the paper out for review or desk reject
   Â which Editor to assign the paper to
4. Editor reads the paper to decide whether to send out for review and/or who to invite as reviewers and sends invitation and the paper to the reviewers
5. Reviewer(s) submit a review report and a recommendation to the Editor
6. Editor makes a decision and makes a recommendation to the EIC and sends a decision letter to the author(s) along with the review reports – Letter:
   Â states the decision and reason(s) for the decision
   Â may provide additional comments by the editor
7. Editor may provide guidance on important issues raised by the reviewers if the decision is “revise and resubmit”
8. Upon resubmission for R&R – 4 to 7 are usually repeated until reject or accept decision is made
Why do papers get desk rejected?

- Topic doesn’t fit with the journal
  - e.g., paper that doesn’t mention ethics is submitted to Journal of Business Ethics
- Lack of citations for papers published in that journal or other relevant local journals (e.g., Abacus, AAR, AJM, Pacific Basin Finance Journal)
- It’s not about increasing the impact factor, it’s about engagement with the local literature and demonstrating relevance to the readership
- Clear lack of incremental contribution
- Poor motivation
- Poor research design
- Inappropriate analyses and/or conclusions
- Low quality paper that doesn’t meet academic standards and rigour
- Similarity score is too high
Why do revised papers get rejected in later rounds?

Â Revised paper doesn’t address the reviewer’s comments, e.g.
   Â Doesn’t do something they were asked to do and no reasonable explanation is provided
   Â Can’t make a clear case for contribution of the paper, validity of proxies for constructs, etc.
   Â Asked to better develop hypotheses, but revised paper still has poor arguments leading to the hypotheses
   Â Revision highlights issues that were not clear in the earlier version of the paper
   Â **Unreasonable reviewers** – no matter what you do, they are not going to change their original opinion of your paper
Reading Decision Letters and Review Reports

- Read the decision letter very carefully
- Assess whether the decision is reject, revise and resubmit, conditional acceptance or accept
- Read the review reports carefully and consider how you can/will address each point
- Do not discount what the reviewer says (e.g., If they say something is unclear, assume that it is unclear rather than assume the reviewer is an idiot)
- Wait a couple of weeks and then go through the review reports again
Resubmissions When You Have a Revise and Resubmit (R&R) Decision

- Discuss how to address the issues raised with your co-authors and colleagues
- Before rewriting the paper, draft a response to the reviewer based on how you intend to address the comments
- Double check that you are addressing the comments in an appropriate manner
- Get agreement from the research team that this will be your response
- You may decide to change your initial response as you work on the revision
Resubmissions When You Have a R&R Decision

Â Revised paper should address all of the reviewers’ comments (or explain why some issue(s) cannot be addressed/remedied in the response to the reviewer)
Â If you disagree with a comment, you can’t just ignore it
Â If they ask you to collect more data, then you should do it or explain why it can’t be done in the response to the reviewer
Â If the reviewer was wrong about a matter of fact – I don’t usually say they were wrong – I point out where the correct statement is made, e.g., On page xx the revised paper states …. I might add some more in the response as this is consistent with ....
Resubmissions When You Have a R&R Decision

Â If the reviewer is vague, such as
  Â “I have concerns that omitted correlated variables may be driving your results”
  Â Try to add some more variables or respond that you have included all the typical control variables and ask whether the reviewer has some specific suggestions
  Â “I have concerns about the incremental contribution of your paper” but they don’t specifically identify the concerns
  Â Try to rewrite the contributions section of the introduction and be a bit more specific about how you add to the literature and why that contribution is important

Â Conflicting recommendations by reviewers and/or Editor
  Â Go with the Editor if they give advice on which one to follow
  Â If no advice from the Editor, then I usually follow the one that makes most sense and explain my choice in the response letter
Resubmissions When You Have a R&R Decision

- Resubmission includes a “response to the reviewers”, which reproduces the review points raised by the reviewers and a description of how you have addressed each point
- Sometimes I include the revised text and sometimes I refer to the revised page(s) or footnote
- Depends on the length of the revised text and how important the issue is
- When I refer to the pages, I provide a short summary of the gist of the changes
- Do not make unnecessary changes outside of the issues raised by the reviewers – you can make things worse
- Even if your paper is rejected, you should revise the paper in line with the relevant reviewers’ comments before submitting the paper to a new journal
Useful References


