Responses to Reviewers: 5 Tips

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1. Reviewers are people — they have **perspectives & agendas**

**Read for content**

- Read slowly and carefully
- Read again & restate their critiques in your own words
- What do their questions say about their interests?

**Read for tone**

- Are they supportive? Hostile?
- Is their tone negative or positive?
- Do they have evident biases?

*These assessments will help you frame effective responses…*
2. **Triage the responses**

- **Easy fixes**
  - Rewording
  - Minor insertion/deletion

- **Moderate effort**
  - Clarifications
  - Adding information
  - Minor additions to analysis

- **Major effort**
  - Complex or time-consuming additions
  - Requests to restructure

- **Harms the paper**
  - Bad science
  - Inappropriate suggestions (e.g., off message)
Complete and easy to read!

• Single space the response

• Cut and paste reviewer requests & comments into the document.

• Italicize reviewer comments and number them (if not already numbered)

• Your responses will not be italicized. Indent them to further distinguish them.

• Unless otherwise specified, fonts should be serif (e.g., Times New Roman) and 12pt.

• Paste the sentences or paragraphs you will change into your response. Indent them further.
4. Writing your responses

- Respond to all the easy requests first
- Discuss major requests with co-authors and decide how to handle them. Get co-authors working on those if you can.
- Respond to moderate-effort requests while strategizing about major requests.
- Respond to major requests as you complete the work.
- Politely deny requests that will cause harm. Include a substantive explanation.
- When responses and changes are complete, then insert the changed section in the manuscript and insert line numbers in the response if required.
5. Common questions

- **What do I do if 2 reviewers offer the same or conflicting suggestions?** Answer twice, synthesize and answer twice, or choose one option.

- **What if a reviewer suggests something that will harm my paper?** Say no politely and explain why.

- **Do I have to thank the reviewer for every suggestion?** No.

- **What if I receive an obviously hostile or biased review?** Contact the editor.
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