

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)

3. Setting up the Responses to Reviewers

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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