

# Responding to Peer Review: Insights for Successfully Revising Your Manuscript



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September 29, 2023*

 OPEN ACCESS | March 16, 2012

## The Medical Master Tutor Training

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[https://doi.org/10.15766/mep\\_2374-8265.9116](https://doi.org/10.15766/mep_2374-8265.9116)

# My scholarly journey (to date)

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- Review, Author, Review, Author, and Review Again  
Conference and Journal Reviews
- Top 10 Reviewer for MedEdPortal
- 2020 Sponsorship to Associate Editor

# MedEdPortal Editorial

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"I am reaching out to you as one of a group of individuals who has demonstrated consistent outstanding service as a reviewer and/or author, to gauge your interest in applying to be an associate editor (AE)."

# My publication journey...

- Basic Science research
- Education research project at HMS
- First submission to Academic Medicine
- Review invitation(s) from Academic Medicine
- Excellence in Reviewing Award - Academic Medicine
- Review at other med ed journals
- Publish
- Review
- Academic Medicine Board Member
- Review, review, review...publish...review, review



What role(s) do you  
currently play in  
educational  
scholarship?

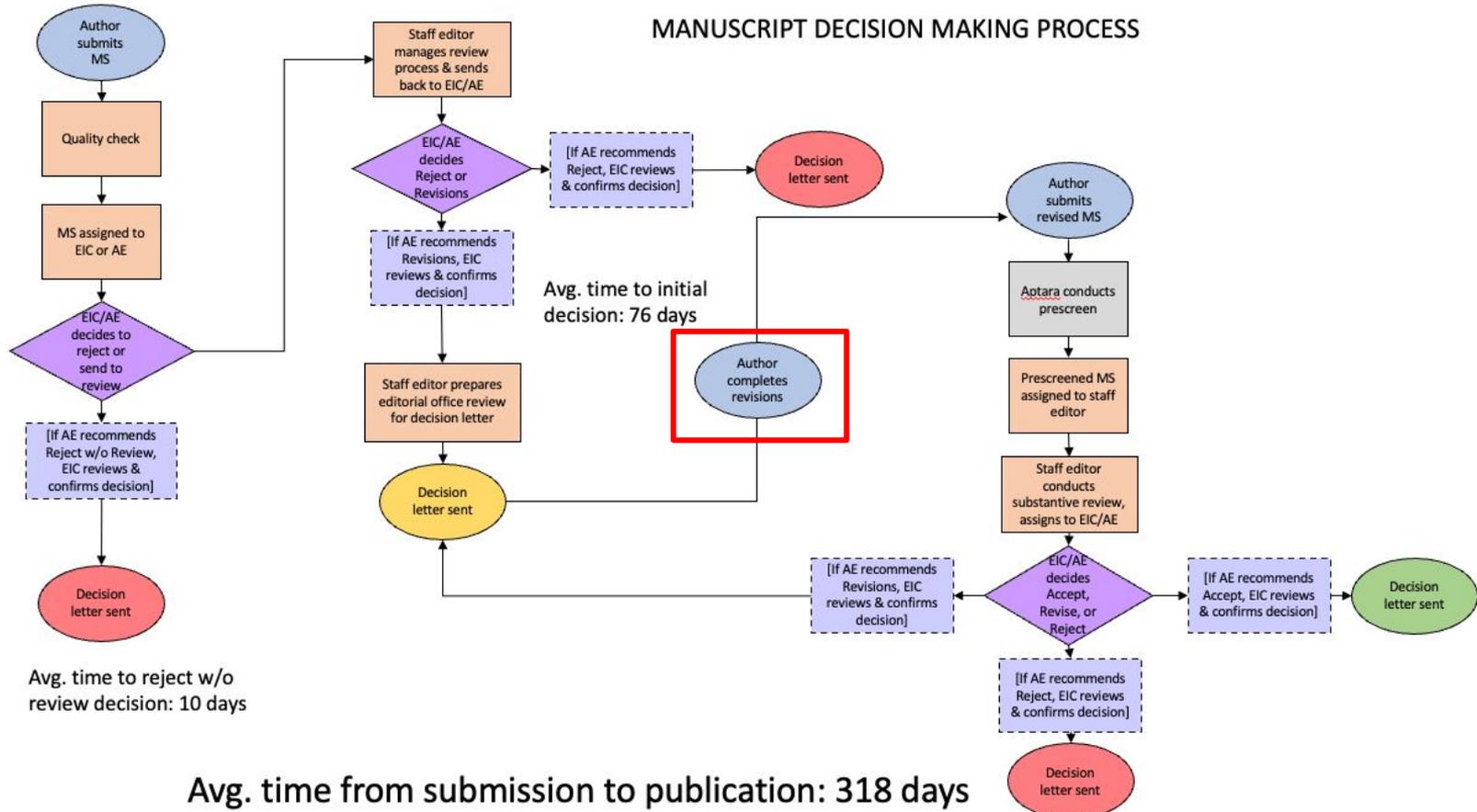
- A. Author
- B. Peer Reviewer
- C. Assoc. Editor
- D. Editor in Chief

# Ten Tips to Move From “Revisions Needed” to Resubmission

Holly S. Meyer, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences;  
Jan Carline, PhD, professor, Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education, Department of Family Medicine and Pharmacy,  
University of Washington; and Steven J. Durning, MD, PhD, professor, Medicine and Pathology, Department of Medicine,  
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# Publication submission process



# MedEdPortal Editorial Screening

1

Contains all necessary educational materials (appendices) that others can replicate.

2

Represents a unique contribution to the field.

3

Does not have significant overlap with submitting author's prior publications (e.g., check submission form for prior presentations, reference list for OTHER publications by same author)

4

Is not in such a niche area that no one would look for it in MedEdPORTAL.

# Assoc. Editor Screening

## New Submissions

[Submit New Manuscript](#)

Submissions Sent Back to Author (0)

Incomplete Submissions (0)

Submissions Waiting for Author's Approval (0)

Submissions Being Processed (0)

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I do a detailed "reviewer" review at this stage—save my notes for later

# MedEdPortal Reviewer: Crosswalk the rubric

Criterion	Description
Clear goals	The author clearly states the educational objectives of the work.
Adequate preparation	The author uses prior work (e.g., existing scholarship and personal experience) to inform and develop the work.
Appropriate methods	The author uses a suitable approach to meet the stated objectives of the work.
Significant results	The author achieves the goals and contributes to the field in a manner that invites others to use the work.
Effective presentation	The author effectively organizes and presents the content of the work.
Reflective critique	The author thoughtfully assesses the submission to refine, enhance, or expand the original concept.

# Peer/Editorial Review

## Revisions

- Submissions Needing Revision (0)
- Revisions Sent Back to Author (0)
- Incomplete Submissions Being Revised (0)
- Revisions Waiting for Author's Approval (0)
- Revisions Being Processed (0)
- Declined Revisions (0)

## Completed

- Submissions with a Decision (0)
- Submissions with Production Completed (0)

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1. Do reviewers demonstrate broad agreement?
  2. Do I have any concerns about whether they represent a fair, unbiased, and overly-critical assessment?
  3. Are the reviewers comments in a form suitable to be conveyed to the author?

## My approach to review

Invitation to review: Read the Abstract, decide to Accept or Decline

**Read 1:** Goal: to get familiar with the paper

**Read 2:** Goal: to take notes and have an overall impression

**Write** the review (AM guide for reviewers)

**Read 3:** Goal: to check one more time, if nothing is missing

**Submit:** make recommendation for Accept vs. **Revise** vs. Reject

## Ten Tips to Revising Your Manuscript

1. Everyone on the research team should take responsibility.
2. Celebrate! An invitation for revision is good news!
3. Let emotions settle before you start responding to Editors and Reviewers.
4. Create a system to review/organize/address comments with the research team.
5. Create a plan/timeline with the co-authors.
6. Draft a systematic point-by-point response to the Editor/Reviewers' comments.
7. Identify similar and discordant comments.
8. Communicate your response clearly, explain your rationale if you disagree.
9. Balance the word limit.
10. Consider Editor/Reviewers' comments as supportive guidance: they are people dedicated to quality scholarship



## Tip 1: Everyone on the research team should take responsibility

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- Selecting a journal for submission
- Anticipating editorial decision
- Creating Plans A, B, C...
- Revising the paper for resubmission
- Handling the emotional challenge

The background of the slide is decorated with two party hats. One is blue with various colored stars (red, yellow, orange, light blue) and a green starburst. The other is orange with blue horizontal stripes and orange dots. There are also green starbursts and colorful streamers (yellow, green, orange) scattered around.

## Tip 2. Celebrate! An invitation for revision is good news!

- Editor: your paper is within the scope of the journal
- Editor: the revision is feasible
- Reviewers: your paper's strengths outweigh its weaknesses
- You received actionable guidance on how to make your paper stronger
- First decision letter: usually major revision

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**Please select one or more responses, I have:**

- A. A manuscript that was accepted in the first round “As is”
  - B. A manuscript that was accepted with revisions
  - C. A manuscript that was rejected in one journal and accepted as another
-



## Tip 3. Let emotions settle before you start responding to Editors and Reviewers

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- Decision letters may feel overwhelming
  - Editor/Reviewer may misunderstand your text
  - You may misunderstand Editor/Reviewers comments
  - Decision letters can be VERY long
  - Revision time can be short

## Tip 4. Create a system to review/organize/address comments with the research team



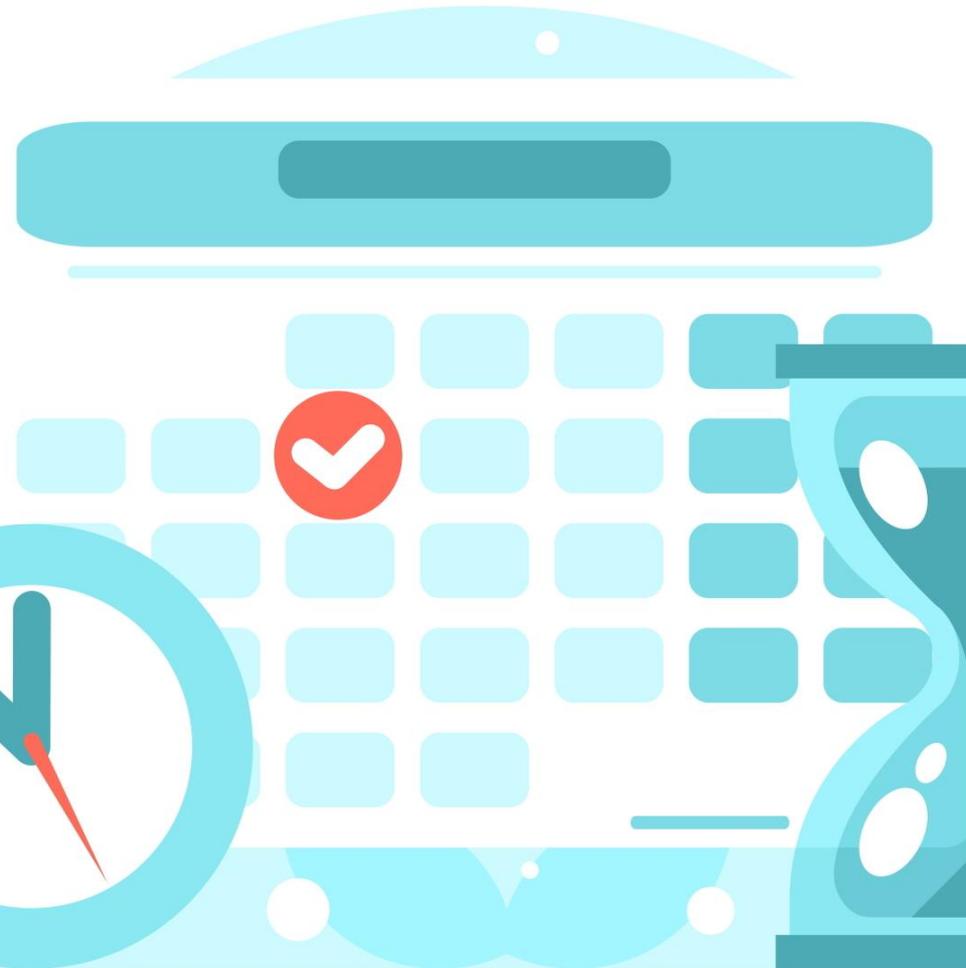
- Look for common themes between Editor/Reviewers' comments
- Organize comments according to topics/difficulty to address
- Share responsibility between co-authors
- Create shared document(s) with co-authors
- Check the journal guidance on required format
- Create a Response-to-Reviewers table/document

## Story of multiple rounds of review

I was excited about creating an Infographic on the iterative process of writing a research proposal

- Submitted as an AM Last Page (1 page)
- Received the first decision letter, “Major revision”
- Submitted the “paper” after two months of revisions
- Received the second decision letter, “Major revision”
- Submitted the “paper” after one month of revisions
- Received the third decision letter, “Minor revision”
- Submitted the “paper” after one month or revisions

“ACCEPT”



## Tip 5. Create a plan/timeline with the co-authors

- Who will do what by when?
- Organized list of comments → Responsible individual
- Ask for extension if needed

# Tip 6. Point by Point Response to Reviewers

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REVIEWER 1 COMMENT	AUTHOR RESPONSE	PAGE NUMBER
<b>1. Can the authors describe the characteristics of funded vs non-funded proposals?</b>	Added a statement to clarify that non-funded proposals did not meet rubric criteria.	9/Lines 171
<b>2. I am curious in regard to the diversity of participants and team members. Can the authors describe whether there is heterogeneity in the teams (e.g. racial/ethnic representation, involvement of students/trainees)?</b>	Please see Table 1 for grantee demographics. Demographic data on participants was not collected. This is also reported in the first paragraph of the Results section.	22, Table 1
<b>3. Can the authors elaborate on their findings on distrust from community due to previous diversity and inclusion experiences, and possible recommendations on how to move forward in this area to build trust, especially if the implementation has been a challenge for the majority of the projects funded (which may further perpetuate this distrust)?</b>	This is a great question, which we wish we had pursued this more deeply during the focus group sessions. We did add additional data about distrust was added to Table 4. Lastly, we added principles related to successful community-based participatory research in the Discussion.	30-32, Table 4
<b>4. “Racial identity” in Table 1 should be changed to be inclusive of ethnicity</b>	Ethnic identity was added to Table 1	22, Table 1



## Tip 7. Identify similar and discordant comments

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- Similar comments: may provide you with the reviewer's rationale
- Discordant comments:
  - Decide which recommendation makes sense to you (Negotiate between reviewers)
  - Co-authors' help (references)
  - Defer to editor

# Tip 7. Identify similar and discordant comments

**Reviewer 1:** The study type should be labeled as a mixed-methods survey study

**Reviewer 2:** This study is a observational cohort study.

## **Author Response:**

We have not reported along the AAPOR reporting guidelines, particularly the “outcome rates from final disposition distributions”. We would like to stick with cohort study as noted by Reviewer 2.

*When responding to reviewer comments, remember that you are talking to the editor(s), not the reviewers.*



## Tip 8. Communicate your response clearly, explain your rationale if you disagree

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- Have you (really) considered the Editor/Reviewers viewpoint?
  - Use Editor/Reviewers' comments to refine your rationale (and reference)
  - Use Editor's guidance in prioritizing between Reviewers' comments
  - Consider adding to your limitations section.

Good and Bad Sentence Starters for Responding Reviewers' Comments

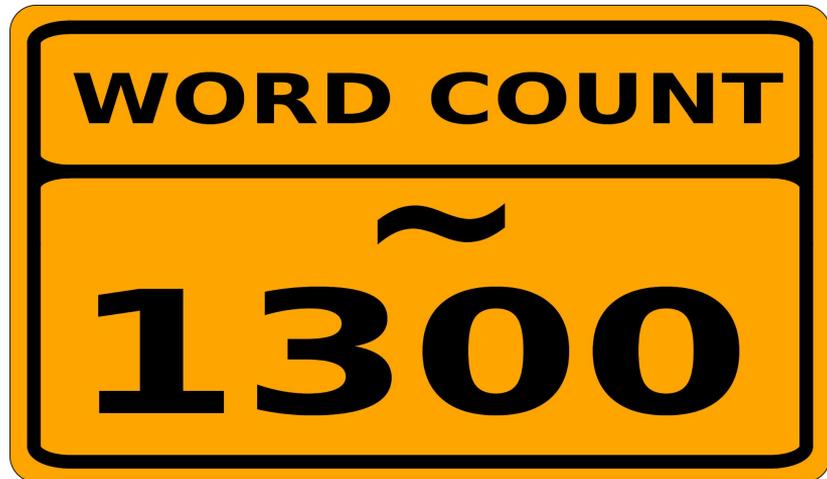
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<b>Good example</b>	<b>Bad example</b>
We would like to thank the reviewer for the interest on this topic...	I do not think the reviewers understand my point...
The Reviewer has correctly pointed out that...	It would not necessary to change according to the reviewers' suggestion because...
We acknowledge that..., yet...	We simply do not have such data...
We concur with the Reviewer that...; nonetheless...	Repeating the experiences/analysis would not actually change our conclusion...

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# Tip 9. Balance the word limit

Conflict between brevity and responding fully to the reviewer comments



1. Check journal requirements
2. Offer a solution but defer final decision to the editors.
3. Re-read “Start to finish”: avoid clunkiness that can emerge during revisions

## Tip 10. Consider Editor/Reviewers' comments as supportive guidance: They are people dedicated to quality scholarship



- Reviewers' responsibility to critically appraise your work
- Use the revision as an opportunity to bring your paper to its max potential
- "Rejection is an opportunity for resubmission!"

Q&A

