

Responding to Peer Review: Insights for Successfully Revising Your Manuscript, September 29, 2023

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Celebrate when you receive a revision decision!

Most journals rarely accept manuscripts without at least some revisions. Don't be discouraged by a major revisions decision. That means the journal thinks your ideas and your work have merit and they're interested in your manuscript, even if they and the reviewers ask for a number of changes.

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

Use an explanation of revisions table.

Copy/paste each comment from the reviewers and editors in one column of your table, include your response to that comment in the next column, and document where in your manuscript you've made the corresponding change in a third column. Using this format makes it easy for editors to find and evaluate your changes.

You can download *Academic Medicine's* explanation of revisions table template at https://edmgr.ovid.com/acadmed/accounts/Explanation_of_revisions.docx.

Tip 6. Point by Point Response to Reviewers

REVIEWER 1 COMMENT	AUTHOR RESPONSE	PAGE NUMBER
1. Can the authors describe the characteristics of funded vs non-funded proposals?	Added a statement to clarify that non-funded proposals did not meet rubric criteria.	9/Lines 171
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)?	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
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)?	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
4. "Racial identity" in Table 1 should be changed to be inclusive of ethnicity	Ethnic identity was added to Table 1	22, Table 1

Additional Tips

- Become a reviewer, accept invitations to review, and do a good job. Reviewing can help you improve your own scholarship, and submitting high quality reviews can get you recognized by the journal. Reviewing can also be a pathway to getting more involved with the journal on the editorial board or the editor team.
- It's OK to email the editorial office to ask for an extension if you need more time to revise your manuscript. You can also email the editorial office to ask for clarification or with questions about the reviewers' or editors' comments if you're unsure what they're asking you to do.
- When you're reading the reviewers' and editors' comments, think about why they said what they said. Maybe the text isn't clear and, while their comments may have missed the point of your argument, you may be able to make edits to make it clearer what you meant to say so future readers don't have the same confusion.
- In your explanation of revisions table, provide an adequate description of each change without overwhelming the editors with too much detail. Your table shouldn't be longer than your manuscript!

Additional Resources

- Annotated Bibliography of Journals for Educational Scholarship from the Group on Educational Affairs (GEA) Medical Education Scholarship, Research, and Evaluation Section (MESRE)
<https://www.aamc.org/media/38166/download>
- Meyer HS, Carline J, Durning SJ. Ten tips to move from “revisions needed” to resubmission. *Acad Med*. 2016;91:e15.
https://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2016/12000/Ten_Tips_to_Move_From_Revisions_Needed_to.48.aspx
- Wong G. Tips for responding to reviewers’ comments—From an editor’s or reviewer’s points of view. *Gut Liver*. 2019;13:7–10. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6347010/>
- The *Review Criteria for Research Manuscripts* includes a helpful 1-page checklist that reviewers can follow when they’re evaluating each section of a paper. Even though this checklist is geared toward reviewers, it’s useful as an author to know what reviewers are looking for as they evaluate your manuscript so you can be sure you’ve included the appropriate information. <https://store.aamc.org/review-criteria-for-research-manuscripts.html>

These key moments and helpful resources are from a monthly webinar series hosted by the editorial teams of the AAMC’s 2 peer-reviewed journals, Academic Medicine and MedEdPORTAL. Sessions cover the importance of publishing your education scholarship and practical suggestions for how to do so successfully. All are invited to attend. Learn more about upcoming sessions at <https://www.aamc.org/publishingwebinar>.