Responding to Reviewers

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https://fangfang-zhang.github.io/
Peer Review Process

XXX ---> XXX-R1 ---> XXX-R2 ---> XXX-R3 ......

Not being rejected is a success of R1.
Your feelings

Accepted: 🌟 HAPPY

Rejected: 😞 SAD

Revision: 😊😊

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Goal of revision

Make the reviewers “happy”
Be ready for responding to reviewers

- Keep calm
- Read all the comments before answering
- Answer every comment
- Answer what are asked
- Tack and mention the changes made
Take time to reflect and consider

• Don’t be in a rush to respond to the feedback – sleep on it. Your responses will be more objective if you take time to mull over the reviewers’ comments.

• Look at the comments as an opportunity to improve your research and writing---peer review as a “gift”.

• Analyse the feedback objectively: pay attention to the positive as well as the negative.

• Be open to the possibility that the reviewer may not have understood your points because you did not write clearly!

• Check that you have understood the comment. If, despite trying, you still do not understand, seek clarification.

• Some reviewers appear to be posing a question, but are actually giving an instruction.
Respond to each point

You don’t have to agree with all the suggestions – but you do need to consider and respond to them all.

When you agree with the suggestion …
• Explain and/or show what you changed in response to the feedback.
  Be specific: rather than simply saying ‘fixed’, explain the change and state where (line/page) the new text is in the revised manuscript.

When you disagree with the suggestion …
• Explain, with evidence, why you disagree.
  If you agree with the problem pointed out, but have a different solution, make it clear why you have decided on a different revision.
Respond to each point

For example,

I agree that the order/presentation of information in this paragraph was misleading. The paragraph needs to make it clear that [...].

Commas have been removed from all documents.

On the reviewer’s recommendation, we have inserted [...].

For example,

You have raised an important point. Although the focus of the paper is not to closely monitor [...], given the concerns raised, we have decided to reduce the emphasis on [...].

This is a good point. I have now mentioned it in the materials and methods. However, I do not believe it needs to be [...].

We agree that this needs to be carefully worded. Consequently, we have added [...] to explain [...] We believe putting this in the Introduction provides the additional context the reader requires.
Respond respectfully

• Keep your tone professional and polite.

• Acknowledge reviewer’s efforts by thanking them for their feedback.

• Thank the reviewer for pointing out obvious errors.

• If you disagree with a suggestion, do so politely and objectively.

For example,

We appreciate the feedback and valuable suggestions.

Thanks for pointing this out. I have corrected the spelling.

[...] has been added. Thanks for the suggestion.

We believe that removing this section, as suggested, would not [...], because [...].
Make life easier for the editor/reviewers

• Write a simple **cover letter** to the editor.

• Add your **response directly** beside or after each comment. You could use a **different colour or font** to make it easier to distinguish the suggestion and response.

• For relatively brief changes, **copy** the new version into your response letter and **note** the page number in the revised manuscript.

• If you have added or revised an extended section (e.g. included/revised a whole paragraph), explain in general the changes made and refer to pages of the revised manuscript.
## Be Tactable While Responding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are peer reviewers always right?</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the comment is genuine</td>
<td>Acknowledge it and make the changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>If the comment is improper</td>
<td>Disagree politely with a justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If additional work/experiment is asked</td>
<td>Do if possible; else tactfully answer why the work cannot be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradicting reviewers’ comments</td>
<td>Stick with what you think is more correct/proper</td>
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Summary

1. Take a break
2. Give point-by-point responses
3. Provide well-reasoned arguments (**self-contained**, quote the **full set** of reviews)
4. Pay attention to details
5. Appreciate the reviewer’s work
Any Discussions/Questions?