

The Publication Process Demystified

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Presenters

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Overview

- The presubmission stage
- Submitting the manuscript
- Postsubmission
- Post mortem: the decision and reviews
- If invited to resubmit

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The presubmission stage

- Identifying the appropriate journal
- Preparing the manuscript
- Is my manuscript ready for submission?

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Identifying the appropriate journal

- Does my paper “fit” the journal’s character?
- Audience: Does my intended audience match the journal’s intended audience?
- Journal’s efficiency
- What do I want this paper to do for me?

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Does my paper “fit”?

- Journals differ
 - More theoretically oriented or more descriptively oriented?
 - Theoretical orientation
 - Specialist or generalist
 - Research reports or larger, programmatic papers
- How to determine character of a journal?
 - How does the journal describe itself?
 - What has been published in the journal?
 - Talk to your colleagues, mentors, advisors
 - (Carefully) as the editor

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How does the journal describe itself?



LANGUAGE
A JOURNAL OF THE LINGUISTIC
SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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Editorial Policies

- [Focus and Scope](#)
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Focus and Scope

Language, a journal of the Linguistic Society of America, publishes research articles dealing with linguistic theory, the teaching of linguistics, and language policy. We also publish book reviews and notes of interest to the academic and professional linguistic community.

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How does the journal describe itself?

Phonological Analysis (Online Only)

Phonological Analysis welcomes submissions of original, high quality scholarship in three areas of phonological research not currently represented in the pages of *Language*: (a) deep description and analysis of primary phonological data without the necessity of a theoretical focus, (b) in-depth elucidation of assumptions of phonological theories, and (c) detailed computational modeling or simulation of phonological systems. The section



ISSN: 0954-3945 (Print), 1469-8021 (Online)

Editors: William Labov *University of Pennsylvania, USA* and Rena Torres Cacoullos *Pennsylvania State University, USA*

[Editorial board](#)

Language Variation and Change is the only journal dedicated exclusively to the study of linguistic variation and the capacity to deal with systematic and inherent variation in synchronic and diachronic linguistics. Sociolinguistics involves analysing the interaction of language, culture and society; the more specific study of variation is concerned with the impact of this interaction on the structures and processes of traditional linguistics. *Language Variation and Change* concentrates on the details of linguistic structure in actual speech production and processing (or writing), including contemporary or historical sources.

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What has been published in the journal?

- Look at the titles of papers published over the past 3-4 years
- Look at the papers themselves. Do they look like your paper?
- Look at your own list of references: Do you cite papers from this journal?

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Get input from others

- Talk to your colleagues, advisors and mentors
 - They may have more experience in general, and with the journal in particular
 - But be careful of anecdotal evidence
- Approach the editor
 - But only if really necessary
 - Editor may indicate that the paper is appropriate
 - That does not imply anything about outcome of review process

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What are your goals?

- Do you need fast results?
 - On the job market
 - Coming up for tenure
 - Journal's time-to-decision should matter more
 - Time-to-publication matters, but less
- Do you need to make an impact?
 - An important, position statement paper
 - Culmination of research program
 - Venue may matter more than time

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The presubmission stage

- Identifying the appropriate journal
- Preparing the manuscript
- Is my manuscript ready for submission?

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Preparing the manuscript

- Follow the journal's instructions exactly
- Pay attention to “inclusive language”
- Proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread
- Appearances matter

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Follow journal's instructions

- Line spacing
- Figures and table placement
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Section numbering
- Glossing conventions
- etc.

Manuscript format/style

All manuscripts must be submitted as a single file in PDF format (excluding supplementary files that may be uploaded as separate files). Submissions in a different file format, or that consist of multiple files, may be returned to authors without review.

Articles submitted for review do not have to follow the *Language* style sheet. In fact, it is best if articles that are still in the reviewing stage are formatted and presented in a way that makes it easy to read and understand. This means, for instance, keeping figures and tables where they most appropriately belong in the text, and using footnotes rather than endnotes. We encourage you to keep ease of reading in mind when preparing your manuscript for initial submission. Upon acceptance for

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Inclusive Language policies

- Many journals have a policy about inclusive language
 - Pronoun usage
 - Example sentences, etc.
- LSA Policy: www.linguisticsociety.org/content/guidelines-inclusive-language
- Consider using even if the journal does not require it

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Proofread, proofread, proofread

- Avoid all grammatical errors
 - Spelling mistakes (typos or otherwise)
 - Incomplete sentences
 - Ungrammatical sentences
- Consistency in style
 - Personal or impersonal okay, but be consistent
 - More or less formal okay, but be consistent

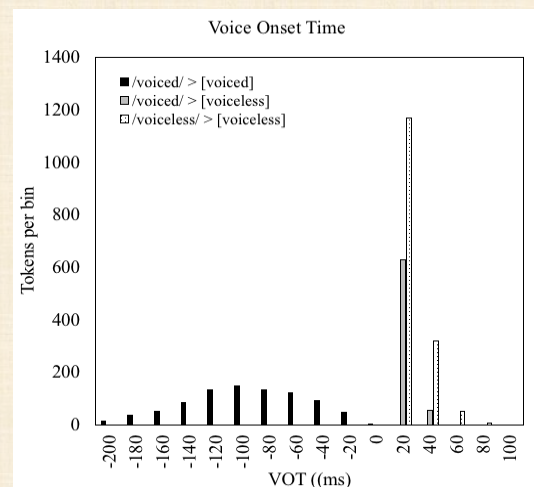
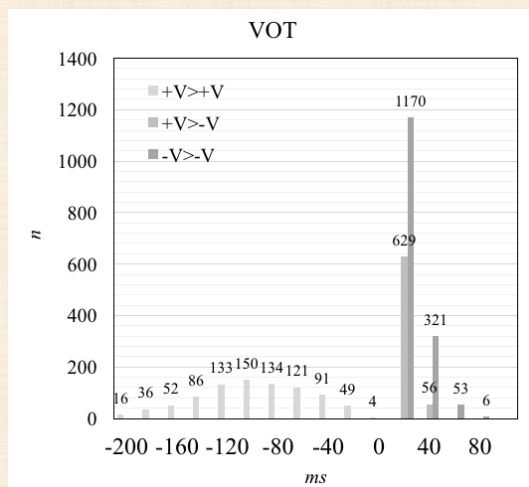
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Appearances matter

- Your paper is judged by its appearance
 - Inconsistency and sloppiness create doubt about the content of the paper
 - Consistent formatting and style throughout
 - If you gloss something, gloss everything
 - Consistent numbering scheme
- Figures, tables, etc.
 - Professional and consistent in appearance
 - How will they appear on screen and in print? Some reviewers print papers, other read them on screen.

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Appearances matter



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Appearances matter

Fixed effects: Model 3

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	p value
(Intercept)	-0.24339	0.16968	-1.434	0.16
AgeYounger	0.14369	0.16159	0.889	0.38
Condition/voiceless/_[voiceless]	0.71843	0.21411	3.355	0.001
Grouplabial	-0.05478	0.21549	-0.254	0.80
AgeYounger:Condition/voiceless/_[voiceless]	-0.57132	0.15494	-3.687	0.001

Results of model testing for the effect of phonological voicing on voice onset time

Predictor	β	SE(β)	df	t	p
Intercept	-0.24	0.17	73	-1.43	0.16
Age	0.14	0.16	21	0.89	0.38
Phonological Voicing	0.72	0.21	78	3.36	0.001
Place of Articulation	-0.05	0.22	82	-0.25	0.80
Age * Phonological Voicing	-0.57	0.15	23	-3.69	0.001

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The presubmission stage

- Identifying the appropriate journal
- Preparing the manuscript
- Is my manuscript ready for submission?

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Excellent term paper ≠ good journal article

- Evaluated against different standards
- What can be done in the last 4 weeks of the semester?
vs.
How much can be done without real time limits?

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Dissertation ≠ good journal article

- Different goals
- Dissertation
 - Shows you know the literature = extensive literature review
 - Shows that you do research = more, smaller contributions
 - More information on false starts, etc.
- Article
 - Assumption is you know the literature and that you can do research
 - Assumes readers are familiar with main concepts
 - Gets to the point much faster
 - Stick to the relevant

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First draft ≠ good journal article

- Revise, rewrite, revise, rewrite
- Get feedback: conferences, colleagues, advisors, etc.
- Come back after some time and re-read
- More polished writing than most you may do in grad school

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Publication before submission?

- Can be helpful for getting feedback, and building CV, but ...
- Make sure to consult journal's policies
- Some journals have very strict policies, some are more lenient
- Conference proceedings: peer reviewed vs. non-peer reviewed
- Open archives: LingBuzz, Semantics Archive, ROA

Submission of previously published work

As a general policy, *Language* will not consider for publication papers that have been published elsewhere or that are currently under consideration for publication in a different venue. Papers submitted to *Language* that are found to be in violation of this policy will be summarily rejected, irrespective of the stage they are at in the review process. Submissions incorporating results that have been published elsewhere such as in a working papers or conference proceedings volume, may be considered for publication in *Language*, provided that they build on those results and develop the ideas and evidence along new lines or in greater depth. [Contact the editor](#) beforehand to confirm whether a submission incorporating components of previously published research will be eligible for review. The final decision about whether a paper will be considered for review rests with the editor.

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Duplicate submissions

- Never submit the same manuscript simultaneously to more than one venue
- Violation of basic ethical standards of scientific publication
- Why?
 - You will be caught and your reputation will suffer
 - Makes unnecessary work for others

Submitting to other journals at the same time

Following accepted ethical practice in academia, authors should not submit the same manuscript to more than one publication venue at a time (be that a different journal or an edited book). Papers submitted to *Language* and found to have been submitted elsewhere will be returned immediately without review, and the editorial team of the other publication will be alerted to the double submission. Papers submitted to *Language* at any stage of the review process, including "accepted for publication", will be summarily rejected if they are found to be under consideration or previously published in another venue. Authors with submissions elsewhere that bear similarity to the submitted work are encouraged to send a copy along with the submission to *Language*.

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Online, attachment, hard copy?

- Most journals now have an online submission system
- Some smaller journals may still work with e-mail attachments
- I doubt that any still work with hard copy submissions
- Benefits of online systems
 - More reliable
 - Tracking of progress
 - Faster

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Follow the instructions

- What are the file type requirements?
- One document, or separate documents for images, etc.
- Is a cover letter required?
- Is a separate abstract required?
- Are key words required?
- A statement about the originality of the work?
- A statement confirming ethical research procedures?
- Information about funding
- etc.

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Cover letter

- Some journals require a separate cover letter
- Some submission interfaces have a place to add a “Note to the Editor”

Dear Professor Garcia,

Please find enclosed a manuscript that we are submitting for review to *Journal X*. This research investigates an interesting, previously unnoticed phenomenon in the vocalic phonology of *Language L*. We appreciate your consideration of our research, and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sincerely,

The Authors

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To suggest reviewers or not?

- Some journals request this, some don't
- It is acceptable to do so, but be careful ...
 - Impression that you're selecting reviewers who may be sympathetic
 - Editor will probably select some reviewers from outside your list
- May be okay to suggest avoidance of certain reviewers
 - But be very careful with this
 - Intellectual/theoretical disagreement not sufficient reasons

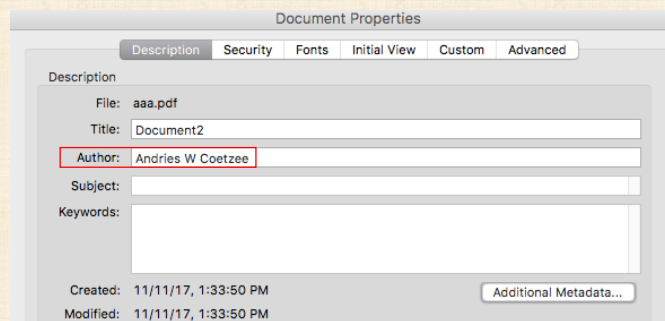
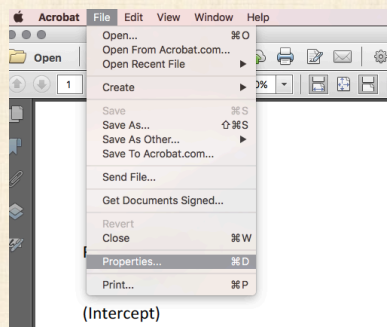
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Anonymization of manuscript

- Most journals employ single or double-blind review
- Both of these require anonymization of your manuscript
- Follow journal's instructions very carefully
 - Replace self-references with AUTHOR?
 - Replace first person references with third person references?
- And make sure to remove meta data from your files

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Anonymization of manuscript



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Postsubmission

1. Editorial review
2. The peer review
3. The editorial decision
4. The length of the review process

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Editorial review

- The journal's editor assesses each submission initially.
- "Desk rejection": unsuitable submissions are declined without external review.
- If the editorial team includes Associate Editors, then a viable submission is assigned to an AE based on specialization.
- The AE reads the submission as a specialist to assess merit and may also recommend desk rejection.

Editorial review: desk rejection

- The practice of desk rejection conserves reviewer resources and saves you time.
- The guiding question: *Is the submission likely to survive the external review process?*
- Reasons for desk rejecting a submission:
 - Thematic incompatibility.
 - Failure to conform to guidelines.
 - Innovative contribution is insufficient.
 - Flaws in methodology, argumentation, exposition.
 - Paper does not deliver on what it promises.
 - Poor writing.

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The peer review

The AE solicits 2-3 reports from experts in the field who:

- Determine whether the paper is appropriate for the journal.
- Determine whether the paper's contribution is sufficient for publication in the journal.
- Provide (hopefully) high-quality feedback for the author.
 - The paper's strengths and weaknesses
 - Suggestions for improvement
- Make an explicit recommendation as to the decision.

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Editorial decision: The Associate Editor

The AE produces a report that

- Summarizes the evaluations of the external reviews, highlighting the most important points.
- Provides his/her own assessment.
- Charts a path for the author to follow in revising the paper.
- Makes an explicit recommendation to the Editor.

If there is no AE, then the editor does all of these things.

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Editorial decision: The Editor

- The Editor assesses the materials and makes a decision.
 - In the case of some journals, Associate Editors function as Action Editors, and they make the decision.
- The Editor's letter includes...
 - The editorial decision
 - The AE report and external reviews
 - May specify a deadline for resubmission
 - Instructions for resubmission
 - *Keep the decision letter and follow its instructions later!*

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Editorial decision

The typical decision categories:

- Accept (usually after 1-2 rounds of revision)
- Minor revisions required
- Revise and resubmit: the editors believe that a single major revision plus minor tweaks is enough to bring the paper to publication standard.
- Decline:
 - The paper may have merit, but the editors do not see a clear path to publication, or more than one round of major revision will likely be required.
 - The paper does not have sufficient merit to invite a resubmission.

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Length of the review process

- The length of the process varies across journals.
 - Language: 1- 6 months for a research article (average ~ 4 months).
 - JASA claims 8 weeks for the category Express Letters (short papers)
 - Journal of Phonetics: avg. 103 days (2016-2017).
- Factors affecting time to decision include
 - Number of readers sequentially in the review process
 - Length of the manuscript (longer papers take longer to review)
 - Time spent soliciting external reviews
 - The time taken by the external reviewers

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Length of the review process

- What if the review seems to be taking a long time?
- Check on the status of the paper in the online record for the submission, first.
- A polite status inquiry may be appropriate.
 - However, make sure that the period of time you were told to expect has already elapsed.
 - For a journal with a 4-6 month review process, 2-3 months is too soon to ask.

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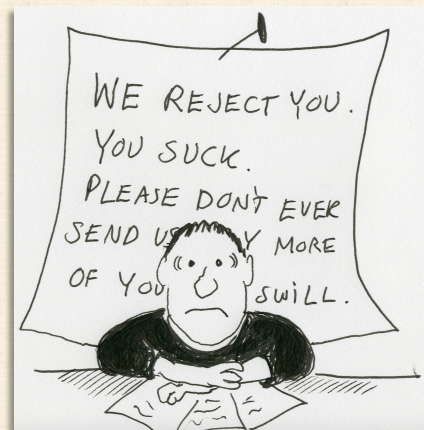
Post mortem: the decision & reviews

1. I was rejected...now what?
2. Processing the reviews
3. What not to do

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I was rejected...now what?

- Because our ideas define us professionally, the rejection of our intellectual output can feel especially punishing.
- Most of us have had our work rejected at some point.
- The rejection of one's work is a normal part of academic life and does not reflect on your personal worth.



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I was rejected...now what?



- You can use what you've learned to your advantage.
- You may not need to abandon the paper.
- Mine the reviews for useful feedback and improve the paper.

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Initial processing of the reviews

- Consider reading the letter and reviews over once, then setting them aside until you have processed your initial reaction and can read the feedback objectively and dispassionately.
- When you're ready, read each review in detail. Sort comments according to considerations such as...
 - Easy fixes (typos? adding a definition?) vs. issues that require deeper thought
 - Expositional vs. more substantive methodological/theoretical issues.
 - Issues may be due to a reader's misunderstanding (was more clarity on your part needed?) vs. issues on which there is real disagreement with the reviewers.

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What not to do

- Consider not writing an angry, defensive letter challenging the negative decision you received yesterday.
 - Above all and always, take a deep breath. Count to 1,000.
 - Don't insult the objectivity, ethics, or qualifications of the reviewers.
 - Don't criticize the editor's decision, suggest that the editor isn't qualified to evaluate research in your field, etc.
 - Don't imply that there is a conspiracy to suppress your work.
- Consider how an action taken in a moment of disappointment may reflect on you later.

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Rebuttal letter?

- It may seem tempting to write a letter challenging a rejection.
- This step should be carefully considered.
 - Editors and AEs evaluate the quality of reviews as well as the quality of the submission.
 - If they believe a reviewer has been unfair or biased, they have probably already considered obtaining an additional review.
- If you believe a rebuttal is warranted, be prepared to make a convincing, well-supported argument in measured, polite language.
- This should only rarely if ever be done.

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If invited to resubmit

1. Deciding whether to resubmit
2. The revision
3. Responding to reviews
4. What to expect the second time around
5. What not to do

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Deciding whether to resubmit

- It can be useful to maintain a ranked list of journals appropriate for your work.
- Carefully evaluate the reviews and editor's letter to decide whether to resubmit to the same journal, or whether to submit to your next choice.
 - Is the tone of the editor's letter and reviews positive and inviting? Did the AE and reviewers engage with your work?
 - Are the revisions requested by the reviewers fair?
 - Even if the reviewers are basically fair, are you willing to take the paper in the direction they suggest?
 - If the amount of work requested is massive, are you willing to undertake it?

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Deciding whether to resubmit

- If you decide to submit to a different journal...
 - Use the feedback you have received to improve the paper in the ways you can.
 - Be aware that scholars review for multiple journals. You may get the same reviewer(s) again.
 - Editors are unimpressed when reviewers indicate that they have evaluated the paper for a different journal and that the author did not take the prior feedback on board.

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The revision

- Editors and reviewers expect that authors will make every reasonable effort to use the reviewers' feedback to improve the paper.
- They also expect the scope of the revision to be in keeping with the character of the original submission and the work requested by the reviewers. (Not too little, no "extreme makeovers" for no good reason...)
- Therefore, read the reviews again, and again, and again. Make checklists.

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The revision

- Nonresponsive revisions (in which revising authors ignore legitimate requests for change) are viewed negatively. Not responding adequately to feedback is fairly often grounds for rejection.
- However, there may be legitimate reasons why you might not be able to accommodate every request.
 - Sometimes reviewers are wrong. (Be very careful before adopting this view – disagreeing with you doesn't necessarily mean that a reviewer is wrong.)
 - The reviews may provide conflicting requests for improvement.
 - The Editor or Associate Editor might help you by providing their take, but you may have to chart your own path.

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Responding to reviews

- A resubmission is accompanied by a response letter which
 - Thanks the reviewers and editors for their time and insights.
 - Describes in detail how the reviewers' concerns were addressed.
 - Describes other significant changes to the paper.
 - States which criticisms were not accommodated, and why.
- Authors often copy the response letter and reviews and insert their remarks. This can produce unnecessarily long response documents.
- Check and follow any guidelines.
- Tone is very important. Be measured, polite, not defensive.

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What to expect the second time around

- The Editors will decide whether to assess the changes in house or whether another round or external review is needed.
- If the decision was “revise and resubmit” (major revisions)...
 - The paper will certainly be sent back to the original reviewers.
 - The editors may decide to obtain a fresh review (new reviewer).
 - The review may take nearly as long as for the initial submission.
 - Unfortunately, if the paper is judged to require yet another round of major revision, or if additional important shortcomings are identified, it is possible that the submission might be rejected at this point.

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What to expect the second time around

- If the revisions requested were relatively minor, the editors will decide whether to assess the changes themselves, or send the paper to a subset of the reviewers (possibly only one).
 - In this case, and especially if the revisions are assessed in house, the paper’s review may be quicker.
- It is quite usual for a paper to undergo a round of major revision and then a subsequent round of revision for minor tweaks.

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What not to do

- Revise the paper to the extent that it is almost not recognizable as the same paper, unless the changes are clearly in direct response to the reviews.
- Adopt a defensive tone in the response letter.
- Use the response letter to complain that the reviewers were wrong, instead of following their advice in the revision.
- Send the resubmission to the editors by email, or create a new online submission for the same paper. *Follow the instructions in the decision letter.*

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Congratulations!

Your paper has been accepted. Now, what can you expect?

- You may be asked to provide a pre-production draft of the paper formatted according to the journal's template. This is a chance for last-minute fixes.
- Some journals will assume the version they last reviewed is definitive and send that version to production.
- Your paper will now be passed to the production staff.
 - The production staff at some journals (Language, for example) may be a single person, or it may be a group of people.
 - The length of time it takes for the production staff to contact you will depend on how many there are and the current backlog of papers in production.



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Congratulations!

- After a period of time (several weeks to months), you will receive a request to read and amend proofs, answer formatting questions and supply additional information (e.g. references).
- Nowadays, this step is typically done online.
- You will be asked to complete the requested steps in a matter of a few days.
- This is not an opportunity to make major changes, and you may be charged for excessive edits.
- The lag-time between the proof stage and publication in print will vary. Nowadays, many print journals (including Language) are publishing papers online before they appear in print.



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Attributions

1. Peer-review-process: <https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/what-is-peer-review/the-peer-review-process.html>
2. "We reject you. You suck.", <https://blotterpaper.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/rejection10691.jpg>
3. "Welcome to rejection: stay strong", <http://www.thesocialmediasamurai.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/rejection.png>
4. Confetti background: <https://orangemarmaladebooks.com/2016/04/18/and-the-winner-is-2/3558497-falling-confetti-background-stock-vector-confetti/>

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