Introduction

Confidential high-quality reviews that are useful to authors and editors ensure that JBJS Open Access serves the international orthopaedic community of readers as a premier orthopaedic journal.

Content review is conducted by Consultant and Guest Reviewers. Consultant Reviewers are orthopaedic surgeons or physicians or scientists from other disciplines who possess special expertise and who have demonstrated their willingness to perform timely and thorough manuscript reviews for JBJS, Inc. Guest Reviewers have special experience or knowledge on a specific topic.

A methodological review is conducted for papers that have received a favorable content review, have complex analytic methodology, and are being considered for publication. Methodological reviews are performed by the Deputy Editors for Methodology and Biostatistics or Consultant Reviewers for Methodology. The Deputy Editors for Methodology and Biostatistics have expertise in key methodological areas such as epidemiology, biostatistics, outcomes research, cost-effectiveness analysis, technology evaluation, and health-policy analysis.

This document describes the peer-review process at JBJS Open Access and provides information on how to review a manuscript for this journal.

Overview of the JBJS Open Access Peer-Review Process

1. An author submits or elects to transfer a manuscript to JBJS Open Access.
2. The Editorial Office assigns the manuscript to one of the Co-Editors, who reviews the manuscript. On the basis of manuscript quality and editorial priorities, the handling Co-Editor then decides either to reject the paper without further review or to proceed with peer review.
3. The Co-Editor invites Consultant Reviewers and/or Guest Reviewers to review the manuscript.
4. Each reviewer evaluates the manuscript and returns a decision recommendation to the Co-Editor.
5. The Co-Editor collates the reviews in a decision letter for the author and recommends (a) revision (major or minor), (b) rejection, or (c) acceptance.
6. The decision letter is sent to the author.
7. When the author submits a revised manuscript, it may be sent back to the reviewers for their comments regarding whether the author has addressed their concerns as well as to a Statistics and Methodology Editor for a methodological review if needed.

**How to Review a Manuscript for *JBJS Open Access***

**General Guidelines**

1. Do not rush to accept an invitation to review.
   - First, read the invitation, as the Co-Editor may include information specific to this review that will help you decide whether to accept.
   - Next, consider whether you have time to complete the review before the deadline, whether you are familiar enough with the content area and/or methods to provide a high-quality review that will be useful to the Co-Editor and the author, and whether you have any potential conflicts of interest.
   - If you have any concerns, you should contact the Co-Editor. (If you reply to the invitation e-mail, your concerns will be forwarded to the appropriate Co-Editor.)
   - If you decide to accept, please do so by the accept/decline deadline provided in the e-mail.
   - If you decide to decline, please do so promptly so that an invitation can be issued to another reviewer. Occasionally declining to review a manuscript is understandable, and is not viewed negatively by the journal.

2. Allow yourself enough time to complete the review prior to the submission deadline. The time spent reviewing a manuscript varies with the manuscript and the reviewer; novice reviewers will need 2-4 hours to complete a good review.

3. Keep the content of the manuscript confidential. Maintain the same standards that you would expect others to uphold when reviewing your work. Be aware of “subliminal integration”—that is, later subconsciously using information contained in a manuscript that you have reviewed.

4. Follow a systematic procedure to review the manuscript and to write your review. Please see below for the Instructions for Reviewing Manuscripts.

5. Submit your review within the deadline.
   - If you will not be able to complete your review in time, please contact the Editorial Office immediately. We will let you know if a delay is acceptable.
   - If a review has not been returned by the due date, you will receive an e-mail from *JBJS Open Access* as a reminder. You will also receive e-mail reminders prior to and on the review due date.
   - Please note that *JBJS Open Access* is indebted to and appreciative of all of our reviewers, and we could not function without you. However, as authors yourselves, you know the frustration resulting from a delayed decision. Returning reviews promptly is one important way in which you can help us to speed the editorial process.

6. Read the comments made by other reviewers when they are made available to you online; doing so allows you to assess your own performance. You are also encouraged to ask the Co-Editor for feedback about your work.
Reviewer performance is evaluated by the Co-Editors, and the evaluations are kept in a confidential database.

Reviewers are graded on a scale of 80-100, and these grades are averaged to determine an overall grade.

Reviewer status is reevaluated with subsequent reviews, and the overall grade can be lowered if the reviewer (1) does not respond to invitations to review, (2) declines the majority of invitations to review, (3) takes 30 days or more to provide a review, (4) never provides a review after accepting an invitation to review, (5) consistently returns an inadequate review, and/or (6) provides a biased review that is not objective.

The Co-Editors’ notes regarding the reviewer’s performance are saved in the database. Reviewers with consistently low scores are removed from the database.

Instructions for Reviewing Manuscripts

1. **Make your review as objective and evidence-based as possible.**
   - Search the literature for systematic reviews on the same topic. The drop-down menu under “Action Links” on the “Pending Reviewer Assignments” page in Editorial Manager provides 4 different ways for you to search the literature using keywords and the title of the article (MEDLINE, Google Scholar, PubMed, and OVID).
   - The Cochrane Library is a great resource for health-care interventions (www.thecochranelibrary.com).
   - The CONSORT statement is a useful tool for reviewing randomized trials (www.consort-statement.org/consort-statement/).
   - Cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies should conform to the format suggested by the STROBE panel (www.strobe-statement.org).
   - Reporting of meta-analyses should conform to the PRISMA Statement criteria.

2. **Always provide constructive criticism.** The authors are likely to have put a huge amount of time and energy into their work. Disparaging or derogatory comments are not helpful. Comments should focus on the manuscript and not on the individual(s) who wrote it.

3. **Provide comments for the author and/or Co-Editor as appropriate.** The review process allows you to enter comments in 2 fields: (1) a field for comments that are likely to be sent to the corresponding author and (2) a separate field for comments that are intended primarily for the Co-Editor and will not necessarily be transmitted to the author.

4. **Do not spend a lot of time correcting language, grammar, or spelling.** If errors in these areas interfere with the overall message, make a general comment to this effect. If a specific error confuses a point, make a specific comment. Otherwise, leave copy-editing to the JBJS copy-editors.

5. **Make sure that your review supports your recommended decision (“Accept,” “Minor Revision,” “Major Revision,” or “Reject”).** Please see Paragraph 7, below, for details. Note that it is often possible to revise a manuscript that has received a “Major Revision” decision so that it will be suitable for publication; however, if the method is irretrievably flawed and the study would have to be repeated in order for the manuscript to be suitable for publication, the paper should be rejected.
6. Use the following structure for your review.

A. Summary. Summarize the manuscript in a short paragraph before providing your comments. The most common reason for authors to disagree with reviews is that they feel misunderstood by the reviewers. Your summary helps the Co-Editors and authors judge whether you understood the work. In your own words, include:
   i. What was the research question? In other words, what were the authors trying to accomplish in their study?
   ii. What was the research method? In other words, how did they attempt to answer their question?

B. General comments. Answer the questions in this section as appropriate.
   i. Is the Introduction appropriate and unbiased?
   ii. Was the method appropriate for the research question? (The Methodology and Statistics Editor will provide a detailed review of the method and statistical analysis.)
   iii. Was the duration of follow-up sufficient? It is standard JBJS Open Access policy to require a minimum of 2 years of follow-up on all patients when the results of a reconstructive procedure are the subject of the paper. This policy lessens the risk of dissemination of faulty information that may lead to the widespread application of procedures that prove, over time, to be of little or no value. The authors should clearly identify patients with <2 years of follow-up and should avoid drawing any conclusions based on those patients. Beware of statements regarding the average duration of follow-up; for example, the inclusion of 3 patients with 3 years of follow-up and 3 patients with 1 year of follow-up does not mean that there was “2 years of follow-up on all patients.” This 2-year-follow-up policy is not always appropriate. For example, if fracture-healing is the prime concern, a 1-year follow-up would be acceptable. In contrast, if the restoration of function is the prime concern, a 2-year follow-up would be required.
   iv. Do the findings, as presented in Results, Tables, and Figures, answer the question? Do the Results correspond with the study objectives and capabilities?
   v. Does the Discussion put the findings in context? Is it balanced? Is the interpretation of the results within the boundaries of the study limitations? Do the authors acknowledge the limitations of the study?
   vi. Are the conclusions supported by the findings?
   vii. Does the article include information that clinicians, policy-makers, patients, and/or the public need to know?
   viii. Are the findings new? Impactful? Confirmatory?
   ix. Is the paper clearly written?
   x. What are the main strengths and limitations of the study?
   xi. Should the study be published?

C. Specific comments. In this section, provide a detailed list of specific concerns, including errors, lack of clarity, etc. Your list should be presented in the form of separate, numbered paragraphs, and each comment should indicate the location
(page and line number) of the corresponding concern. Avoid extensive copyediting (correcting grammar, spelling, syntax, etc.). If you are recommending a “Reject” decision, limit your specific comments as these are primarily intended to help the authors with a revision. Please comment on the following elements of the paper:

i. **Title.** Does it clearly describe the subject and purpose of the paper?

ii. **Abstract.** Is it succinct? Does it accurately reflect the Methods, Results, and Conclusions?

iii. **Methods and Results.** Do these sections provide appropriate information?

iv. **Tables.** Tables are useful if they contain information that cannot be easily summarized in the text. Tables are seldom useful for listing one category of information. Are all of the tables necessary, or is the information also given in the text? Could several tables be combined? Are clarifications or additional columns needed? Please suggest changes if you believe that they are indicated. Do you have suggestions that would present the information more clearly?

v. **Figures.** Illustrations require a great deal of space. Are they all appropriate and necessary? If not, which ones would you delete? Are the legends adequate?

vi. **References.** Is the bibliography complete or excessive? If incomplete, provide citations that you think are relevant.

7. **Select your recommended decision.** Manuscripts should be classified into 1 of 4 general categories, which appear in a drop-down menu in Editorial Manager’s reviewer recommendation screen. We realize that not all manuscripts fit neatly into categories; however, most manuscripts will fit into one of these categories. *JBJS Open Access* will be looking for an overall acceptance rate of 25%-35%.

- “Accept” should be selected if the paper is completely suitable for *JBJS Open Access* and will be of value to its readers. The paper is educational and informative and contains all of the information needed to justify its conclusions and message. It should be published provided that it also receives a satisfactory methodological review, the revisions suggested by both content and methodological reviewers are made, and the questions raised by the reviewers are answered. The content may need some revision or restructuring.

- “Minor Revision” should be selected if the paper will be of value to readers but has flaws that must be remedied before being accepted. Much of the information concerning “Accept” papers is applicable here. The essential difference between “Accept” and “Minor Revision” papers is that the “Minor Revision” paper is incomplete and requires additional data, detail, or data analysis. The content of the manuscript is of interest and should be subject to methodological review, and the content reviewer believes that whatever is missing can be provided by the authors.

- “Major Revision” should be selected when the manuscript in its existing form would be of interest to readers but the reviewer has serious concerns. The invitation to revise with a “Major Revision” decision does not imply that the paper will be accepted after revision. The author is invited to resubmit the paper
for re-review if he or she is able to address these concerns. The assigned Co-
Editor has discretion to decide whether to obtain a methodological review for this
category of papers.

- “Reject” should be selected if the paper should not be published in *JBJS Open
Access*. The subject matter is not suitable for the journal or the content is not of
sufficient educational value. The reviewer must believe strongly that his or her
reservations concerning the manuscript are valid and that the authors cannot
correct the deficiencies. Before assigning a “Reject” classification, the reviewer
should be convinced that the manuscript is not suitable. The reviewer should list 2
or 3 major reasons why he or she believes the manuscript should be rejected. If
the reviewer is convinced that a manuscript should be rejected, it is neither
necessary nor desirable to write as detailed a review as is needed when the author
is being asked to revise the paper. The reviewer should be objective and
especially careful not to write pejorative comments when rendering a “Reject”
decision.

**Correspondence to Authors**

After all reviews have been received, the handling Co-Editor will compose a letter to the
responding author. The purposes of that letter are to inform the author of the decision and to
provide the author with instructive feedback. While the reviewers’ comments to the author are
often directly quoted in the decision letter, the Co-Editor may also, on occasion, paraphrase any
comments that a reviewer has directed to the Co-Editor.

**Recommended Reading**

- [COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#)