

AE Best Practices

(typical mistakes AEs make)

Alessandro Foi
Brendt Wohlberg



**Inviting reviewers without having first
thoroughly checked the manuscript**



Sitting on a new manuscript for a few weeks before deciding that they cannot handle it, and asking for it to be re-assigned to another AE



Inviting reviewers based on some automatic recommendation or list of references, without having checked who they are and whether they have the required expertise and maturity



Inviting only a couple of reviewers at a time, endlessly waiting for their response before inviting more

(we want up to 4x redundancy, since most invitations are declined or left unanswered)



As of 2023, on average,

to get

must secure

must send

3

4

15

reviews

reviewers

invitations

trending upwards

Assigning themselves as anonymous reviewers for manuscripts they are managing

5_a

**Ignoring the need for diversity of opinion
and background among reviewers
(e.g., by assigning most of the reviews
to their own students or colleagues)**

5_b

Making decisions by averaging or counting the reviewers' "votes", instead of focusing on the actual substance of the reviews



Despite major flaws consistently identified by the reviewers, not rejecting a manuscript in the first round, possibly because the majority of the reviewers recommended RQ



Sending decision letters consisting of the unedited template plus reviews, without including an adequate justification for the decision



Sending to authors a decision to revise the manuscript without a digested summary of the key revision items on which the authors must focus in order to have chances to get the manuscript accepted



Making multiple consecutive major revision (RQ) decisions

(SPS policy allows at most one RQ,
SPL and OJSP do not have RQ at all)



**Delaying a difficult decision by allowing
for an excessive number of revisions**

8_b

Sending the manuscript for external review after a minor revision (AQ)

(external review permitted only for new submissions or revisions after RQ – it is OK to *consult* with reviewers about specific issues)



Rejecting a seriously deficient manuscript without explicitly telling the authors either

- 1) that resubmission is discouraged, or**
- 2) what is concretely expected of the revision in order for a resubmission to receive positive consideration by the journal**

10a

Attempting to soften the blow of the justified rejection of a seriously deficient manuscript by encouraging the authors to resubmit after revisions that are clearly not feasible

10_b

Not paying attention to indications of potential ethical violations by authors (e.g., citation stacking) or reviewers (e.g., citation coercion)

(any doubt should be discussed with the EIC)



**Not regularly (at least once per week)
checking the status of all manuscripts in the
queue, immediately contacting reviewers
when reviews are overdue, replacing them
when necessary**

Submitting to inappropriate pressure or intimidation (often by prominent authors)

(any intimidatory or otherwise abusive correspondence should be reported to the EIC)