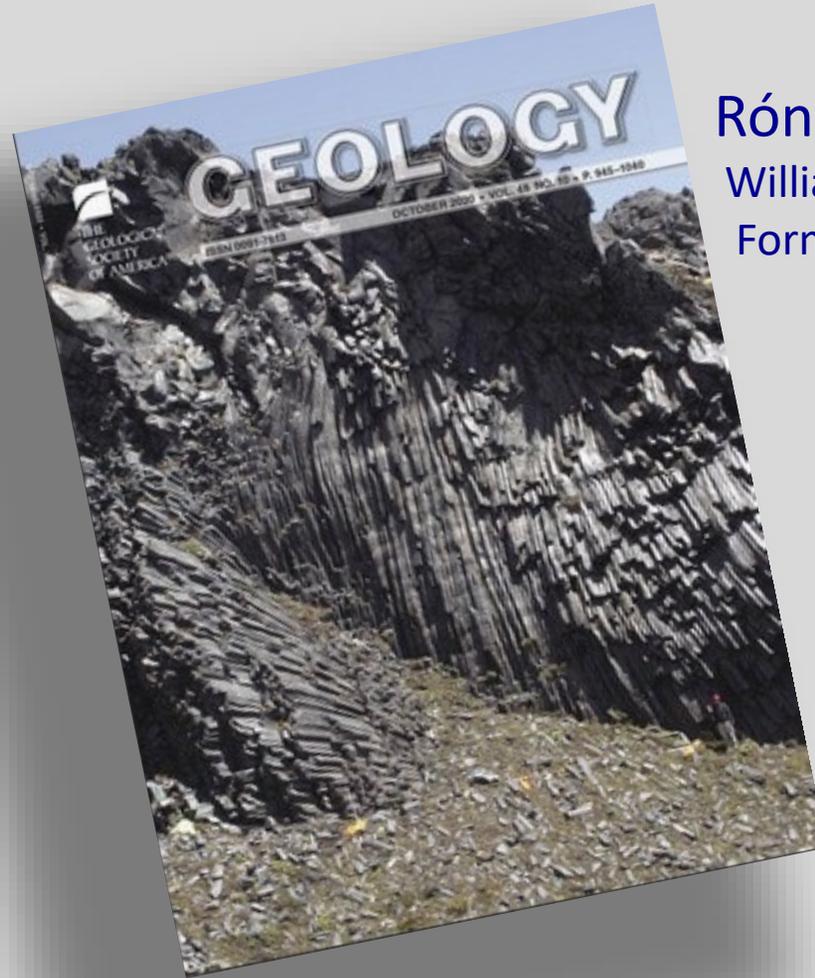




# Success in Publishing: Navigating the Process

## Submission and Review



Rónadh Cox  
Williams College  
Former Editor of GEOLOGY



## Main points:

- (1) Pay attention to submission details:  
it's not all about the paper.
- (2) Pay attention to your writing:  
it's not all about the science.
- (3) Unpacking the submission “black box”
- (4) Don't diss the reviewers!
- (5) As an author, you have a responsibility to review.

(1) Preparing and submitting:  
it's not all about the paper



## As a Writer: Aim high!

You've done great science;  
now make the manuscript as good as you can

→ Do your job right: be professional

- Read and follow journal guidelines for organization and style
- Pay attention to file formats (if appropriate)
- Provide a complete and correct reference list



## Highlighting two submission details:

- (1) The cover letter
- (2) Reviewer suggestions

# 1. The cover letter matters

Why should the journal consider your submission and put its reviewers to all that work?

How NOT to do it (generic, no details):

*Dear Editor,*

*I herewith submit our manuscript. We would like to have the manuscript considered for publication in your journal. Please let me know your decision at your earliest convenience.*

*best,*

*A. Researcher*



# Key things

1

Address the editor by their name if you know it.

2

Include your manuscript's title and the name of the journal.

3

State that your paper has not been published/is not under consideration by another journal.

4

Briefly describe your research. Why is it important? Why will readers find it interesting?

5

Declare any conflicts of interest, or confirm there are none.

6

Include contact information for yourself and any co-authors.

1

Address the editor by their name if you know it.

2

Include your manuscript's title and the name of the journal.

3

State that your paper has not been published/is not under consideration by another journal.

*Dear Dr. Ed Itor,*

*I submit herewith our manuscript entitled “Yet another occurrence of quartz in granite” by Researcher et al. We would like to have the manuscript considered for publication in the Journal of Awesome Geoscience. This work has not been published, nor is it under consideration elsewhere.*

4

Briefly describe your research. Why is it important? Why will readers find it interesting?

*Despite decades of research, we have not yet fully defined the range of occurrence of quartz in granitic rocks, which impedes our ability to truly understand not only granites, but igneous rocks in general. We present results based on comprehensive field work and detailed petrologic analysis, demonstrating that quartz occurs in 100% of granitic rocks of Proterozoic age in Massachusetts.*

4

Briefly describe your research. Why is it important? Why will readers find it interesting?

*Despite decades of research, we have not yet fully defined the range of occurrence of quartz in granitic rocks, which impedes our ability to truly understand not only granites, but igneous rocks in general. We present results based on comprehensive field work and detailed petrologic analysis, demonstrating that quartz occurs in 100% of granitic rocks of Proterozoic age in Massachusetts.*

4

Briefly describe your research. Why is it important? Why will readers find it interesting?

Specifically explain how your work relates to the journal's mission statement and/or would be of interest to the readership:

*...This study will be of interest to readers of the Journal of Awesome Geoscience because it provides breakthrough information about granite, which occurs in all orogenic belts and throughout geologic history.*

5

Declare any conflicts of interest, or confirm there are none.

6

Include contact information for yourself and any co-authors.

Also affirm that you have read the journal guidelines and done your work properly 😊

*...This paper conforms to the journal guidelines as laid out in the Information for Authors. We have no conflict of interest.*

*Yours sincerely,  
A. Researcher*

*Super University, Superville USA  
A\_researcher@SuperUni.edu*

## 2. Suggesting reviewers

Pick people with appropriate expertise, whom you think can give a fair evaluation of the work.

Be mindful of ethics!



## Categories of people to NOT suggest as reviewers:

- Collaborators & co-authors (within the last 5 years)
- Close friends
- Employers or employees
- Family members
- Institutional colleagues
- Advisor or advisee

i.e. anyone with a real *or perceived* conflict of interest.

“If in doubt....leave them out!”

# Journals and societies have detailed ethics policies you can check

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**ETHICS**

We are committed to fostering a culture of integrity and excellence in service to the geosciences, humankind, and as stewards of Earth.

Ethics Policies & Procedures +

Ask a Question or File a Complaint +

## Policies and Publication Ethics



### 1. Frontiers Policies

- 1.1. Open Access and Copyright
- 1.2. Registration with Frontiers
- 1.3. Authorship and Author Responsibilities
  - 1.3.1. Author Contributions
  - 1.3.2. Corresponding Author
- 1.4. Research Integrity: How to Reuse Text
  - 1.4.1. Plagiarism and Duplication
  - 1.4.2. Theses and Dissertations
  - 1.4.3. Conferences, Proceedings, and Abstracts
  - 1.4.4. Blogs
  - 1.4.5. Preprints
  - 1.4.6. Translations
- 1.5. Corrections
- 1.6. Retractions
- 1.7. Ethical Concerns

### 2. Editorial Policies

- 2.1. Conflicts of Interest
  - 2.1.1. What Should I Disclose?
  - 2.1.2. What About Editors and Reviewers?

You may also, if appropriate, list “opposed reviewers”:  
those who would be unlikely to give an objective critique

Again, ethics matter!

- antagonistic personality ✓
- scientific disagreements ✗
- “competitors” ✗



(2) Pay attention to your writing:  
it's not all about the science



# Make editors' and reviewers' jobs easy

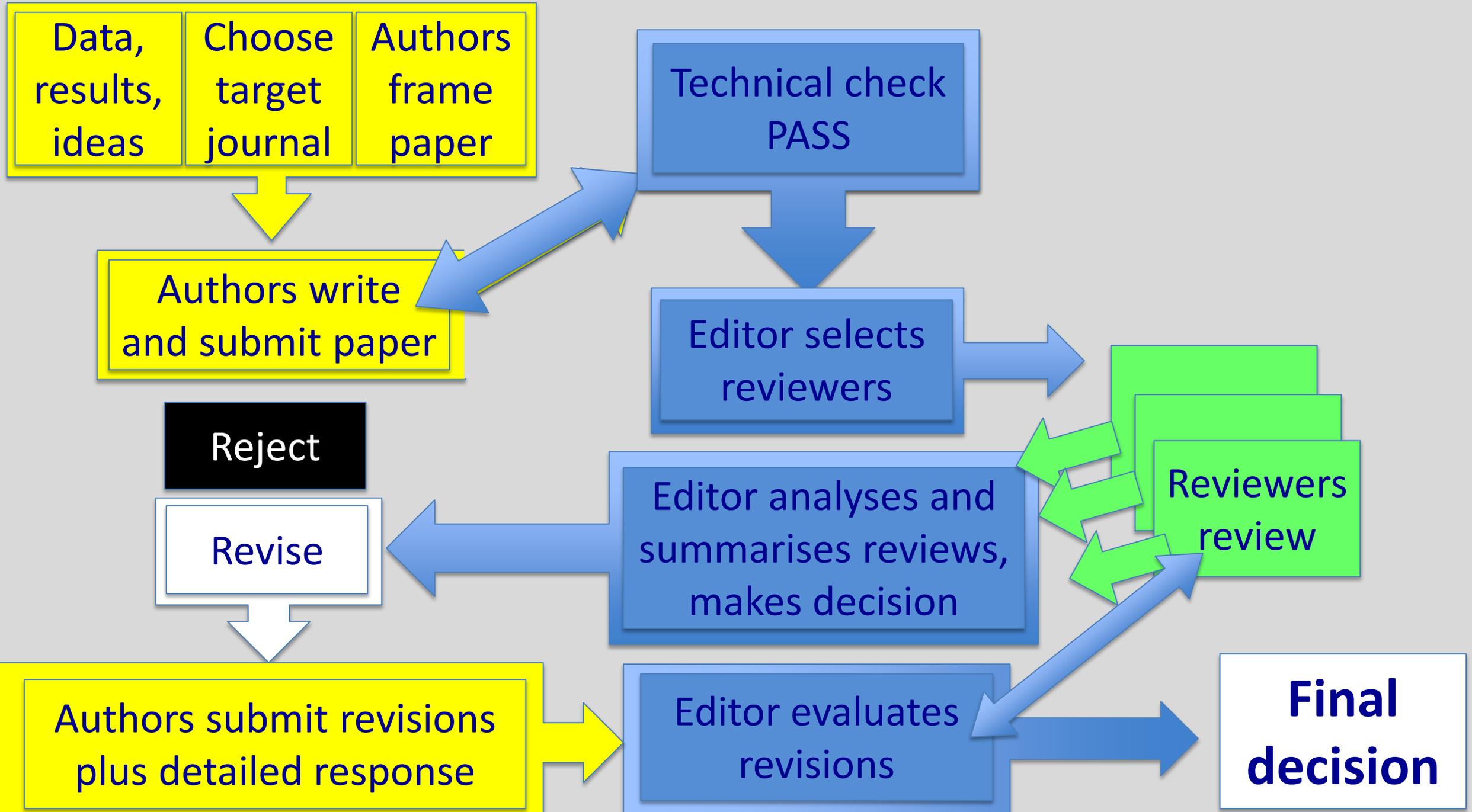
“don't write to be understood:  
write to not be misunderstood”

- It's hard for a reader to follow a paper that is poorly written, poorly prepared, or poorly thought through.
- Reviewers may misunderstand your points, and therefore may not be able to provide constructive criticism.
- If they are irritated with your poor writing, they may be sceptical of your science.



(3) Inside the “black box”:  
what happens after submission?

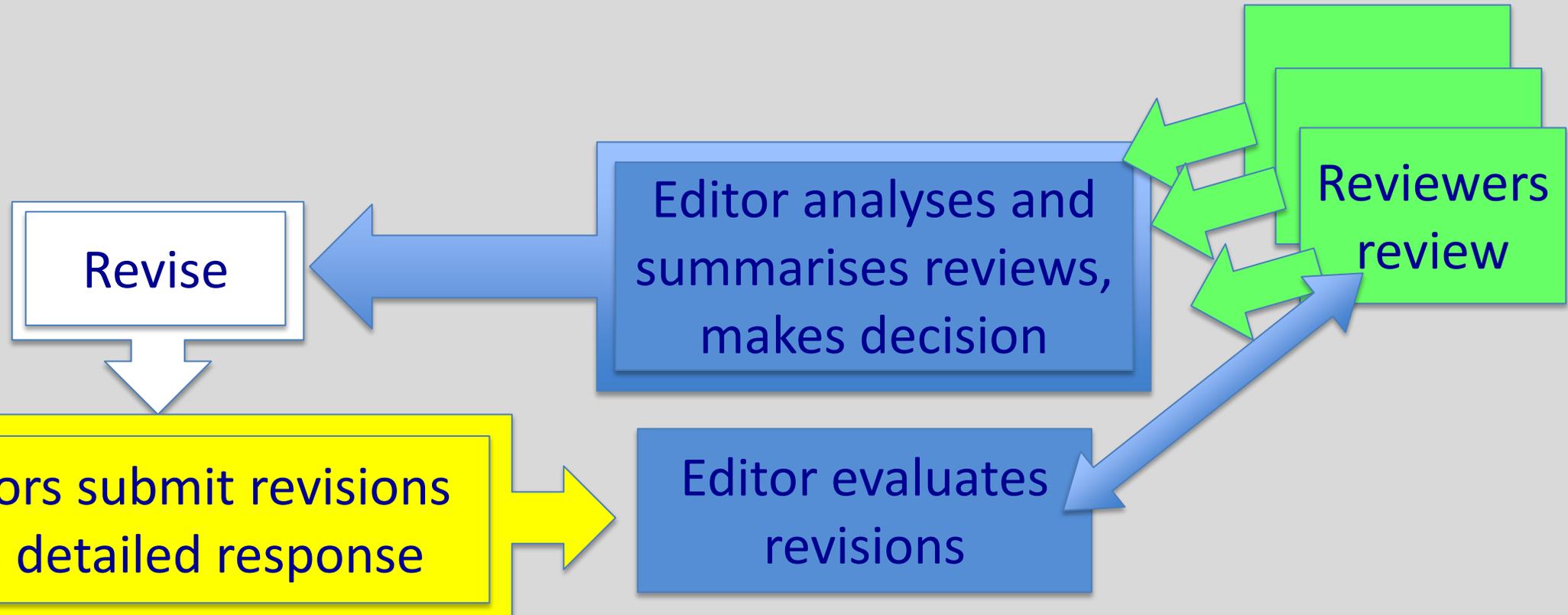




# The review-revise loop

Aim for a single circuit 😊

Attention to detail and clarity in writing are key to efficient and successful review outcomes



(4) Don't diss the reviewers!

They are busy humans too....



# Appreciate the work of the reviewer.

Don't be snarky, or dismissive of criticism

- Reviews are a preview of how other readers may receive your paper. Take them to heart in good spirit
- If the reviewer did not get your point, consider the possibility that you may not have explained it well.
- If you disagree with a comment, refute it (in your response to the editor) in a collegial way, providing solid grounds for your position.



# When working on your revisions:

The tone you take is important

- Don't go at the revisions like a bull at a gate.  
Be organised.
- Make a list of reviewers' points, and as you address each one, update your with the changes you made: i.e. build your "response to the reviewers" as you go along.
- ALWAYS use "track changes" in your manuscript!
- If you do not make a suggested change, specify why that change is not necessary.



## When writing your response:

The tone you take is important

- Don't be snarky. It never goes over well. Even if the reviewer is demonstrably an ass, be gracious.
- “Be kind whenever possible...It's always possible”



## Writing and reviewing are interlinked

As a writer you must consider your reviewers (and other readers)  
Thinking like a reviewer makes you a better writer.

And once an author, you will yourself become a reviewer of others' work





(5) As a submitting author, you have a duty to review the work of others

Every paper you submit for publication will be reviewed by 2-3 people. You should plan to pay that forward.

But also...reviewing is an opportunity! It's great experience, and it teaches you a lot about writing.



# The importance of reviewing: a cautionary tale—and true!

Dear Dr. X,

...General stuff about the paper...

*“I then examined the reviewer records of the first two authors and discovered that, of the 23 requests for reviews sent to you and Dr. Y over many years, not a single completed review has resulted (due to rejection, termination, or failure to provide an agreed review).*

*Although you are not the prime culprit in this record, I find it frankly remarkable that collectively you would submit to a journal in whose well-being you have shown so little interest.*

*Your paper has been rejected without review.”*



## As a Reviewer:

Appreciate the work of the writer.

- Don't be snarky, or dismissive of their interpretations.
- If you disagree with the writer's points, refute them in a collegial way, providing solid grounds.
- If you see or suspect ethical or other serious issues, address them in confidential comments to the editor.
- Your main task is to evaluate the science, but if you see a way to help the writer express their thoughts more clearly, provide that feedback.



## As a Reviewer:

3. Take the opportunity to learn and improve your own writing

- If the writer makes some point well, or you notice a good structural or narrative technique, take that on board and add it to your arsenal.
- If the paper is dreadful, try and understand why it fails, so you can avoid those pitfalls yourself.



# In sum:

Be organised and thorough: professionalism is key!

Be grateful for reviews and be grateful to reviewers.

Seek out opportunities to review!

Ref.: Ms. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Geology

Dear Dr [REDACTED]

I am pleased to tell you that your manuscript has now been accepted for publication. I will be delighted to see this interesting work in print in GEOLOGY

If you have not already done so, please send electronic copies of your final figure files (in native graphics format and eps format) to Lyne Yohe at [lyohe@geosociety.org](mailto:lyohe@geosociety.org).

We will soon be sending you a copyedited version of your paper, for your approval.

All questions you might have about your manuscript should be directed to the editorial office.

Thank you for submitting your work to this journal.

With kind regards,

Dr. Rónadh Cox

