

Journal of Indian Fisheries Association (JIFA)

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JIFA Peer-Review System and Guidelines for Reviewers

The number and quality of scientific articles being published have witnessed a steady increase over the years, due primarily to the increasing number of researchers as well as the number of research journals publishing scientific output. The peer-review process, along with the editorial practice, is considered the main factor that shapes a Journal's reputation, impact factor, and standing within the academic community. Reviewers take on this time-consuming and challenging task as a voluntary contribution towards a public good, demonstrating their commitment to the cause of advancing science.

The *Journal of Indian Fisheries Association* (JIFA) maintains high quality of its published papers by relying on the expertise and unbiased assessment of knowledgeable researchers. The following sections outline the JIFA peer-review system and the specific guidelines for the reviewers.

A. JIFA Peer-Review System

- Reviewer(s) assist the Editor(s) in maintaining the quality of the papers appearing in the Journal and help the authors by constructive criticism of their efforts.
- Reviewer(s) are selected in recognition of authoritative scientific work and their expertise in the fields covered by a Journal.
- Each paper submitted for publication is reviewed by at least two independent reviewers, besides the editorial oversight. If their reports disagree with regard to the suitability of the paper for publication, advice of a third reviewer is sought.
- On submission by authors, the Editor will check the manuscript for its appropriateness for consideration of further peer-review in terms of theme of the article, overall language and quality of writing, whether the manuscript follows the JIFA layout format and author guidelines, etc. Editor might either decline the submission to the author stating the reasons thereof or ask it to be revised and resubmitted for further consideration for review. Only manuscripts considered appropriate and complies with JIFA layout formatting guidelines, will be subjected to peer-review process by the Editor. This decision is made and communicated to Authors within a week of submission.
- Reviewers are first asked to indicate their willingness or otherwise to undertake the review within a week of the Editor's request email. On acceptance, the manuscript is shared with the Reviewer and is requested to submit the Review within 15-20 depending on the type of manuscript. If a Reviewer finds it unable to attend to a manuscript within the deadline,

he/she is asked to return the manuscript immediately without comments in order to allow the Editor to get it reviewed by another referee without further delay.

- A Reviewer's report is meant to guide the Editor, who usually transmits it to the Author to help improve the manuscript or understand the reasons for rejection.
- Although the Editor in most cases transmits the comments of the Reviewers verbatim to the Author, yet it's ensured that the Reviewer remains anonymous to the Authors and vice-versa. At the same time, the Editor never uses the reviewer's comments blindly, but in the best interest of the science and the Journal.
- Authors are asked to follow the suggestions made by the Reviewers, or otherwise state to the Editor the reasons for not doing so.
- Identifying and selecting appropriate reviewers: Editor/Journal Manager maintains a database of suitably qualified peer reviewers with JIFA considering the following qualities: Expertise in one or more areas of the Journal's core subjects; Objectivity; No conflicts of interest; Good judgment; Able to think clearly and logically; Able to write a good critique; Accurate; Readable; Helpful to Editors and Authors; Reliable in returning reviews; and Able to do the review in the allotted time-frame
- Editor objectively monitors the performance of peer reviewers and records the quality and timeliness of their reviews. Editor generally ignores rude, defamatory peer review. Peer reviewers who repeatedly produce poor quality, tardy, abusive or unconstructive reviews are not considered again.
- Editor encourages peer reviewers to identify if they have a conflict of interest with the material they are being asked to review, and asks that peer reviewers decline invitations requesting peer review where any circumstances might prevent them producing a fair peer review.
- If authors request that an individual (or individuals) does not peer review their paper objectively, editors use this information while selecting the peer reviewer. Editor may choose to use peer reviewers suggested by authors, but author's suggestions are not binding on the Editor.
- Editor requests the peer reviewers who delegate peer review to members of their staff to inform the Editor when this occurs.
- If discussions between an author, editor, and peer reviewer have taken place in confidence it remains in confidence unless explicit consent has been given by all parties or there are exceptional circumstances (for example, when they might help substantiate claims of intellectual property theft during peer review).
- Editors or board members are never involved in editorial decisions about their own work. Journal does not accept original research papers and reviews from editors or employees of the Journal.

- Journal editors, members of editorial boards and other editorial staff are requested to withdraw from discussions about submissions where any circumstances might prevent them from offering unbiased editorial decisions.
- Authors have a right to appeal peer-review and editorial decisions. Editor mediates all exchanges between authors and peer reviewers during the peer-review process (i.e., prior to publication), and if agreement cannot be reached, the Editor invites comments from additional peer reviewer(s). The Chief Editor's decision in consultation with the Editorial board/Sectional Editor following such an appeal is final.
- Editorial independence: Editorial independence should be respected. Decisions by editors about whether to publish individual items submitted to a Journal should not be influenced by pressure/extraneous compulsions.

B. Guidelines / Checklists for Reviewers

- Reviewers should not waste inordinate amounts of time correcting minor problems with spelling, grammar, or punctuation; instead suggest to correct them.
- The reviewer must consider the scientific focus, readership, standards and policies of the Journal as he/she reviews the paper. The Journal needs the scientific expertise, not the editorial assistance. ***Journal relies on its reviewers to evaluate the quality, importance, and novelty of the science presented in the manuscript.***
- **Reviewers' comments** that focus completely on minor editorial problems (typographical errors, misspellings) and ***do not comment on the science in the paper, have limited value*** as they do not advise the editor on the importance and validity of the science and do not help the editor to make an informed decision concerning publication.
- **Reviewer is the representative of the Journal**, and *not* the friend of the author. The reviewer must remember that it is unethical to allow a badly flawed paper to pass unchallenged into the peer reviewed literature, where it will be a trap to the unsophisticated reader who will read the manuscript (or perhaps only the abstract) superficially and will simply accept the flawed conclusions at face value. The peer review process is viewed by scientists and the public as providing a scientific stamp of approval to the paper and its contents. The reviewer therefore has an ethical obligation to support work of high quality while appropriately challenging flawed papers.
- **Following questions should be taken into account when reviewing manuscripts**
 - Is the work important and novel?
 - Does the title reflect the content appropriately?
 - Does the abstract describe the content accurately?
 - Are the objectives clearly stated?
 - Are materials, methods and experimental model systems appropriate?
 - Check the rigor of the experimental/non-experimental design (including the inclusion of appropriate controls)
 - Check the quality of the data.
 - Check the appropriateness of the statistical analyses
 - Is the argument expressed clearly, strongly and convincingly?
 - Is the article well structured?
 - Are there any irrelevant sections?
 - Is the field adequately covered? Are there relevant areas that should have been included?
 - Is the article well-supported with bibliographic and other authoritative sources?
 - Is the information, or the interpretation of the information, new and factually correct?
 - Is the interpretation of result made on scientific reasoning?
 - Are the conclusions supported by the discussion?

- Are the supporting illustrations/graphs/other media well chosen? Do they add value?
- Does the article contribute significantly to existing body of knowledge and/or understanding in the field of science covered by JIFA?

• **The Reviewer should also comment on**

- The length of the paper
- The writing quality
- The clarity, accuracy, and completeness of the figures and tables
- The accuracy and adequacy of the introduction which frames the area of the research, of the discussions of prior and related work, and of the citations to the literature

• **Writing of the comments by the Reviewers**

- These must be clear, concise, and accurate.
- Although their primary purpose is to advise the editor, comments to the author frequently are of value in guiding revision of the paper for the same or a different journal and in suggesting ways to improve the project by the inclusion of additional data or experiments.
- Comments to the author may be very brief, especially in the case of an excellent, well-prepared paper.
- They may be extensive if the reviewer feels the paper has valuable elements but requires extensive revisions to present the findings effectively.
- Comments and recommendations should be clear and should be supported with citations to specific areas in the text of the paper.
- When the reviewer's criticism relies on or are supported by data in the literature, the reviewer should provide citations to the relevant papers.
- A good review should help the authors to think more clearly about their work and its design, execution, presentation, and significance.
- Some reviewers submit critiques that are so rude, snide, sarcastic, argumentative, or even obscene that they must be censored before being sent to the authors.
- Some are not transmitted, depriving the author of any beneficial insights the reviewer might have had.
- Rudeness, personal criticism and locker room humor are never appropriate.
- Even the most serious scientific criticisms can be worded and presented in such a way as to be constructive and collegial.
- Reviewers should write critiques using a style and tone that they would want to see in the reviews that they or their trainees receive.
- Reviewers should remember that they are setting the standards of behaviour and collegiality for their field, as well as the standards of science.

- The reviewer should always work to provide reviews that meet high standards of ethics as well as high standards of science

• **Sanctity of Manuscript: *Points to remember***

- Manuscripts under review are confidential documents.
- These are unpublished data and ideas, which must be kept confidential.
- Reviewer cannot share the paper or its contents with his colleagues.
- Reviewer cannot use the information in the paper in his own research or cite it in his publications, before its eventual publication in JIFA or other journals. This can raise serious ethical issues if the work is used to benefit reviewer's research.
- The outcome and content of the review as well as the paper are confidential.
- Lapses in the confidentiality undermine the review process, betray the trust of the authors and the editors, and can create serious problems for everyone involved in the review process.
- The reviewer initially contacted should always let the editor know if the manuscript has been given to another reviewer because it is:
 - Important for the records of the journal
 - The information may be required to configure web portal for the new reviewer
 - Actual reviewer receives credit for his/her efforts
 - Adds the new reviewers to the journal's database, facilitating future invitations to review papers
 - Increases reviewers' visibility - journal lists and thanks reviewers in journal

• **Reviewer should avoid**

- Misrepresenting facts in a review
- Unreasonably delaying the review process
- Unfairly criticizing a competitor's work
- Breaching the confidentiality of the review / failing to disclose a conflict of interest
- Proposing changes that appear to support the reviewer's own work or hypotheses.
- Making use of confidential information to achieve personal or professional gain.
- Using ideas or text from a manuscript under review

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For any queries related to JIFA, write to jifa@cife.edu.in or manager.jifa@cife.edu.in

For any queries related to IFA, write to indianfisheriesassociation@gmail.com

To learn more about **IFA Membership** or to become a **Life Member of IFA**, click

<https://forms.gle/UKJeQimhVScZLHAM6>