

RTI Press uses [Scholastica](#),* a web-based system used by numerous peer-reviewed journals, to handle and administer the manuscript submission and peer-review process.

If you need assistance with Scholastica, please feel free to contact Anne Gering, Managing Editor, at 919-541-6490 (x26490).

Summary of Associate Editor (AE) Responsibilities

- Receive an assignment and conduct a pre-review check
- Identify and invite peer reviewers
- Summarize own and peer reviews
- Communicate decision to the corresponding author and the Executive Editor

Good Rule of Thumb. At any stage, don't let more than a week pass before following up with the author or reviewers or checking into Scholastica.

Receive an Assignment and Conduct a Pre-review Check

You will receive an assignment/manuscript via [Scholastica](#).

1. Read/scan the manuscript to determine whether it is suitable for peer review on scientific and substantive grounds. Consider whether the manuscript is reasonably well constructed and well written.
2. Based on your own review of the manuscript, decide whether to send it out for peer review (see summary table in the column at right).
 - **If YES:** Move to peer review.
 - **If NO:** Either reject the manuscript or ask for resubmission, if that seems appropriate and likely to produce an improved manuscript.
 - a. If the decision was made on the basis of poor manuscript construction or writing style, suggest that the authors explore [mentoring and writing resources](#) on RTI University or the [MCS Writing Center](#).†
 - b. See guidance on “Communicate Decision to the Corresponding Author” on page 2.

* Please note that you must use a Chrome, Firefox, or Safari browser for Scholastica, as the system does not support Internet Explorer.

† Please note that the links in this sentence refer to internal resources and may not be accessible to all readers.

The table below summarizes the decision process.

Point of departure: AE reviews manuscript

Prior to Peer Review	After Each Round of Peer Review
If pre-review check meets standards: Proceed to peer review.	If reviewer recommends acceptance and you agree that no revisions are needed: Accept.
If pre-review standards are unmet but can be addressed: Reject with option to resubmit.	If reviewers and /or you judge the manuscript to be potentially publishable, but see need for revisions: Revise.
If standards are unmet and are unlikely to be addressed: Reject.	If revisions are unlikely to address unmet criteria: Reject.

Identify and Invite Peer Reviewers

At least two reviewers are required for all types of manuscripts except research or policy briefs, which require only one reviewer. For all manuscripts, we recommend inviting at least one more reviewer than required to increase chances of timely completion of the required number of reviews.

NOTE: Recruit non-RTI reviewers whenever possible. Internal RTI reviewers may be invited, but proceed with due diligence to avoid conflict of interest. For all manuscripts, aim for at least one non-RTI reviewer.

Identify potential non-RTI expert reviewers:

- Did the author(s) of the manuscript suggest any peer reviewers?
- Identify reviewers as you might for a peer-reviewed journal: people you know; authors of articles or books on similar topics; internet searches.
- Ask colleagues with related expertise for suggestions of possible reviewers, especially external reviewers.
- Check the references, particularly for names that are repeated.

Identify potential reviewers at RTI

- **AVOID CONFLICT OF INTEREST.** Presume conflict of interest for reviewers in the authors' division. If unsure, ask potential reviewers if they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Did the author(s) of the manuscript suggest any peer reviewers in the cover letter?

- Search the [staff directory](#) (requires RTI login). Enter a word or phrase in the keyword search box to search skills, roles, areas of expertise, collaboration interests, and language names.
- Search [CRIS](#) (requires RTI login).
- Ask other RTI Press Editorial Board members to be reviewers, or invite a specialized reviewer to look at specific sections (e.g., a results section with lots of statistics, equations).

Invite peer reviewers

- Contact possible reviewers and explain what RTI Press is and provide a brief description of the manuscript.
- Register possible reviewers in Scholastica and send an email notifying them of registration.
- Invite potential reviewers you have contacted in Scholastica.

Track progress of peer reviews

- When someone agrees to be a reviewer, be sure to remind them to respond to the Scholastica invitation.
- If a peer reviewer declines an invitation, go back to Scholastica and invite somebody else.
- If reviewers remain delinquent, follow up outside of Scholastica.
- If a reviewer is unresponsive, revoke their invitation via a default email message in Scholastica. This removes them from the system.

Summarize Own and Peer Reviews

Once you have received comments from all reviewers, you will need to read through the reviewers' reports as well as generate your own thoughtful review of the work. When you are ready to make a decision, draw up an overall summary of the reviews for the authors, highlighting the strengths of their piece and the areas that need more work.

In general:

- Start with the positive.
- Be specific in your responses to authors.
- Always be collegial, especially with rejections.

Communicate Decision to the Corresponding Author and the Executive Editor

Once you have summarized the reviews, you must make a decision about the manuscript and communicate that decision to the author. There are several possible options for your decision.

Before peer review

Reject (no review). “No review” means that you are rejecting the manuscript before sending it to any reviewers.

- If pre-review standards are unmet but can be addressed: **Reject with option to resubmit.**
- If standards are unmet and are unlikely to be addressed: **Reject.**

Revise (no review). Explain what is important to revise, pointing out any particular issues brought up by either your review or the RTI Press staff's technical review. Send files with comments for the authors to use as well.

After peer review

Revise. This is by far the most commonly selected option. Explain what is important to revise, pointing out any particular issues brought up by reviewers and any suggestions of your own. If reviewers provided comments in the manuscript, include sanitized files for the authors. Remind authors that, with their resubmission, they must provide a complete, understandable explanation of what they revised (or did not change) in response to reviews.

Accept. If you decide to accept the manuscript, communicate this decision to the author and the relevant Executive Editor. If the manuscript is substantively acceptable but still needs heavy copyediting (such that you would recommend the authors send it to MCS for editing), use the “revise” option instead of “accept.”

Reject (after review). In this case, the manuscript went through the peer review process, but there are issues beyond what might be fixed in a revision. As with any rejection, provide the author with clear explanations of your concerns.

After an author has submitted a revised manuscript

If “revise” was your original decision, determine whether the authors have adequately responded to reviewers' comments in their revised manuscript. If so, accept the manuscript. If not ...

- Consider sending the revised manuscript back to the original reviewer(s) and ask them if they are satisfied with the revisions.
- Consider asking for a review from another person via Scholastica.
- Send the manuscript back to the author for further revisions.