

From Belcher, *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* (357-8).



Week X

Responding to Journal Decisions

Day to Do Task	Week X Daily Writing Tasks	Estimated Task Time
	Read through page 298 and follow the instructions for reading the editors' letter and the reviewers' reports	60 minutes
	Identify which journal decision was made, and decide how you will proceed (pages 298–303)	60 minutes
	Prepare a list of recommended changes and how you plan to respond to them (pages 304–306)	60 minutes
	Revise article (pages 306–310)	?
	Draft your revision cover letter and send article back out (pages 310–314)	60 minutes
	Start the illustration permissions process, if any (pages 314–319)	30 minutes

Above are the tasks you will need to complete once a journal gives you a decision on your article. These tasks are not part of the twelve-week schedule for submitting an article to a journal, but they are the necessary last steps to achieving academic publishing success. Make sure to return to this workbook when you get the journal's decision so that you can make an appropriate plan for revising your article. Depending on the readers' reports, these tasks may take longer than a week.

NAVIGATING THE REVIEW PROCESS

How you respond to journal decisions about the articles you submit will determine your success as an academic. That may seem to be a strong statement, but it's true. If you take negative journal decisions as accurate assessments of your aptitude for scholarship, if you fail to revise when advised to do so, or if you abandon an article just because it was rejected, you won't do well in your chosen profession. Those who persevere despite outright abuse, blithe dismissals, and cruel rejections are those who succeed. Persistence and hard work, not necessarily brilliance, are what garner publication.

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SETTING UP FOR REVISING YOUR ARTICLE

Once you've decided that you're going to revise and resubmit your article, you must take several steps: collect and evaluate the editorial and peer reviewer recommendations, ask the editor for any needed clarifications, start your revision cover letter, and decide how you'll address the recommended changes in your revised article.

Get centered. One of the biggest mistakes that novice authors make is assuming that they must do everything the reviewers tell them to do. Yet no editor expects authors to make all the recommended changes. What they do expect is that you take all recommendations seriously, and that you do something to your article in response to each criticism. But doing something and doing what the reviewers told you to do are two very different things. I'll have more to say about this later. For now, don't get discouraged if you see that some of the recommended revisions are untenable. Remember, you're in control of your article.

Collect the recommendations for revision. Some of the recommendations for revising your article may be in the editorial decision letter, others may be in the reviewers' reports, others may be in emails, and still others may be ideas that occurred to you while awaiting the journal's decision. You need to keep track of all recommended revisions so that you won't forget any of them and can respond to all of them (even if your response is "I won't do that").

Categorize the recommendations. Unfortunately, peer reviewers and editors don't organize or classify recommendations for you. This may seem like a small matter, but it can be quite confusing figuring out what they're recommending or whether they're recommending the same thing. For instance, several sentences in a report may contain no real recommendations, and then the next short sentence will contain three. Or a reviewer will say something vague like "You need to strengthen this sentence, and the ones like it throughout," and you slowly realize that this recommendation isn't about your grammar but about enhancing the thread of your argument. Or one reviewer will say, "You need to cite x and y ," and another reviewer will say, "You need to cite the literature on z ," but they both mean the same thing. You can use any method you like to organize the recommendations. Many SciQuant scholars use an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet can be quite simple, with one column for reviewer criticisms, one column for noting the relevant line and page, and another for your response. If you find it helpful, you can adapt the table on the next page.

Recommendations for Revising My Article

(Use the codes R1, R2, and Ed. after a comment to indicate which reviewer made the comment.)

Text features evaluated	Positive comments	Negative comments	Valid comment? Difficulty of revision?	Line/ page/ section?	Done?
Relation to audience (e.g., clarity)					
Argument					
Literature review, relation to previous research					
Methods					
Presentation of evidence					
Interpretation of evidence					
Claim for significance					
Implications					
Style					
Technical, factual errors					
Typos, spelling errors (with line, page number)					
Other					