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Revising Manuscripts: Trying to Make Everyone Happy

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Revising Manuscripts: Trying to Make Everyone Happy

In our past two editorials we discussed two aspects of the reviewing process for authors (suggesting reviewers for a quick and efficient editorial process) and for reviewers (tips for writing a professional and useful review). In this contribution we give some advice for authors on how to address the reviewer comments so that the manuscript can be quickly (and hopefully favorably) processed.

First, when you submit a revised manuscript, you should submit a marked version of the manuscript that shows the changes made (many journals also require an unmarked version to send to production), and a document that has your replies to the reviewer comments. For the marked version of the manuscript, simply show the added text using highlighting or colored font. There is no need to indicate the text that has been deleted (the manuscript becomes very cluttered if the deleted text is included). For the reply to comments document, reproduce the reviewers' comments in full. Below each comment you should say whether you agree or disagree with the reviewer, and give your reasons for agreeing/disagreeing. You should also indicate the changes made to the manuscript in response to the comment. State the text has been deleted or added, and where this is in the revised manuscript. It is a lot easier to understand this document if you use different colors for the reviewer comments, your reply, and the added and deleted text. This can be a lot of work, but it is important that editors and reviewers can quickly find and assess the changes. Note that when you reply to the reviewer comments it is not necessary to say "We thank the reviewer for their comment" for each comment. It is polite to say something like this, but you only need to do it at the start of the document.

In the reply to the reviewer comments document you should carefully consider each comment, and modify the manuscript to address all the comments. The discussion of the comment should be succinct and to the point – don't write pages of text, your message will get lost! Also, please be polite. Even if you feel the reviewer has been unreasonable, or even rude, in their comment, it is better to take the high road. Answer the comments in a professional way, and try to understand the reviewer's point. Note even if you are convinced that the reviewer is wrong, you should adjust the text of the manuscript to address their concerns. After all, if the reviewer is confused about something in the manuscript, it is very likely that other readers will also be confused! It is also not productive to be stubborn and refuse to make changes to the manuscript to address the reviewer comments. Occasionally we see very detailed and well written replies to a comment from authors, but no changes made to the manuscript. Clearly it is better to incorporate the reply into the revised manuscript to make a better end product.

Sometimes reviewers request extra experiments or calculations. If they add value to the manuscript, and they can be done in a reasonable timeframe, then you should do them and include the results in either the main text or the Supporting Information. If the experiments/calculations cannot be done, or you feel that they are not necessary, then explain the situation. The editor and/or the reviewer will then have to decide whether they are crucial for the manuscript. At times the requested experiments or calculations are extensive, and require significant time and effort. In this case the editor may choose "Reject and Resubmit" rather than "Major Revision" for the manuscript decision. Don't treat this as a rejection and get depressed – it is an opportunity to carefully revise the manuscript and fill in the scientific gaps!

If the reviewer(s) comment that the manuscript is difficult to read, then please have it edited by a professional editing service. Information about Language Editing Services can be

found at the ACS Authoring Services website (<https://authoringservices.acs.org/en/>). Note that services are also available for improving Figures, which is important for increasing the impact of your paper.

Last, take notice of and address the comments from the editorial office. These comments can cover a range of issues, from the quality of the graphics, to the formatting for the manuscript and Supporting Information, as well as scientific issues such as a proper error analysis, ~~and~~ correct control experiments, and justification of the models and calibration of the level of theory used in theory papers. ~~For theory papers... [add text about typical editorial comments for theory]~~

When an editor sends a manuscript back to an author for revision they believe that the manuscript could be published in the journal if certain changes are made. Thus, use the revision process as an opportunity to improve your manuscript. The goal of revising the manuscript is to make everyone happy, the reviewers, the editors, the eventual readers, and yourself. Ultimately, we all want to have a final product that is as good as it can be, and appropriate for the journal. This requires that you think carefully about each comment, and revise the manuscript clarify your message.

Views expressed in this editorial are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the ACS.

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