

# Ethical Issues in Scientific Peer Review

Peer reviewers provide an objective, expert review of the scientific merit of a manuscript. Peer review helps ensure that the standards of journals and the particular field are upheld. Scientific peer review is considered a professional responsibility of researchers.

## REVIEWERS SHOULD:

1

Provide an **objective, fair** assessment of the quality and significance of the research.

2

Avoid performing reviews when a real or apparent **conflict of interest**—a relationship, affiliation, or financial interest—could influence their review in a positive or negative way.

3

Maintain **confidentiality** of the unpublished information; refrain from discussing the information with others or utilizing the information to advance their own research.

4

Prepare **constructive, collegial** comments. Even serious scientific criticisms can be delivered constructively.

5

Strive to complete the review in a **timely** manner.

When in doubt, disclose any concerns you have to the editor before accepting the review (or during the review, if a concern comes up).

For additional guidance see: Rockwell, S. Ethics of Peer Review: A Guide for Manuscript Reviewers  
<https://ori.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/prethics.pdf>