

# 【PhD的自我修养】审稿报告

西海岸的风 东海岸的雨 1/7



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## Preparing a Referee Report: Guidelines and Perspectives

<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=222>

### Preparing a Referee Report: Guidelines and Perspectives

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#### ABSTRACT

Peer review is fundamental to the efficacy of the scientific process. We draw from our experience both as editors, authors and association representatives to provide a set of guidelines for referees in preparing their reports and cover letters to journal editors. While our document is directed to anyone asked to review a paper, our suggestions are especially relevant for new members of the profession when preparing their first reports.

## How to Write an Effective Referee Report and Improve the Scientific Review Process

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.31.1.231>

## How to Write an Effective Referee Report and Improve the Scientific Review Process

Jonathan B. Berk, Campbell R. Harvey, and  
David Hirshleifer

### A Checklist for Reviewing a Paper

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2887708](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2887708)

### A Checklist for Reviewing a Paper

*Duke I&E Research Paper No. 2017-03*

*Stanford University Graduate School of Business Research Paper No. 17-6*

2 Pages • Posted: 21 Dec 2016 • Last revised: 8 Jan 2017

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Date Written: December 21, 2016

### Miryia Holman's pre-submission checklist

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JwwmOgRhd2p-BI\\_RFEMnp04P0l2nNhOHW7JHdaLcyGs/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JwwmOgRhd2p-BI_RFEMnp04P0l2nNhOHW7JHdaLcyGs/edit)

Mirya Holman's pre-submission checklist

Note: Highly tailored to political science and to the fields that I publish in. Evolves all the time. Please adapt to what works for you! My notes are in parentheses – ignore these if you are using the checklist! I PRINT THIS OUT and physically check the checkmarks as I prepare my manuscript, otherwise I'll skip the hard steps ☺

If you prefer a checklist style, Caio Malaquias made [this awesome one](#)

Please feel free to use, adapt, share, or discuss this checklist. If you share, I'd love attribution.

1. Proofread
  - have I proofread my article?
  - did I run spell check and grammar check? (I am a terrible speller)
  - did I proofread the introduction and abstract carefully?
  - did I change the font to **Comic Sans** and 14 pt for a final proofread? (helps your eyes see a problem) (just don't submit in comic sans)
  - do I have page numbers?

## A Referee Report Template

<https://users.nber.org/~nikolovp/studentresources/refreport.pdf>

Referee Report:

Title of the paper

Author's name\*

Date of report

### 1 Overview

This should be a very short paragraph to give the editor an overview of the paper and (if you are a junior reviewer) to demonstrate that you have understood it correctly.

- What does the paper try to do?
- How does it try to do so?
- Does it accomplish what it set out to do?
- What are its key findings?

### 2 Contribution

This should also be no more than a paragraph. The overarching question here is whether the paper is novel in any way to merit publication in this journal.

## Springer: 作者和审稿人教程

<https://www.springer.com/cn/authors-editors/authorandreviewertutorials>

**Authors & editors**

- » MySpringer profile
- » Journal authors
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- » Book authors & editors
- » Conference proceedings
- » Open Access
- » 作者和审稿人教程
- 撰写期刊文稿
- 向期刊提交稿件及同行评审
- 英文写作
- 如何做同行评审
- 开放获取

**作者和审稿人教程****为什么发表你的研究成果很重要?**

也许你需要发表你的成果以便顺利毕业，也许是得到一份工作，亦或是为了让你的事业更上一层楼。但请考虑两个对于科研人员而言最重要的两个使命：

- 为人类知识库添砖加瓦
- 让自己和他人认识宇宙的本质

**你的研究工作，只有在发表后，才算完成**

如果你不发表文章，这一切就无从谈起。何况，他人对你的认知主要基于你发表的文献。如果不发表，其他研究人员就不能从你的工作中获得启迪：这样一来，你的研究流于无形。

**Guidelines for Referee Reports**

<https://are.berkeley.edu/courses/ARE251/2004/assignments/RRGuidelines.pdf>

**Fall 2004****ARE 251 /ECON 270A - Guidelines for Referee Reports**

The purpose of a referee report is to recommend to an editor whether a paper is suitable for publication or not, potentially after revision. Hence, whether the paper is good or not, and you think it deserves publication or not, your job is to document for the editor reasons for accepting, rejecting, requesting revisions. Usually, the referee includes include a good summary of the paper, the development of 3 or 4 main points (positive or negative), and potentially 4 or 5 smaller points that request clarification or addition. Given that I have selected relatively good papers for you to read, this specific referee report may be tilted positively compared to random referee reports. But none of these papers are yet published, and some are still very much in the making, even if done by well-known authors. This means that you should exercise your imagination on these papers too.

First, you should read the paper carefully, checking all the arguments, whether mathematical or not, for correctness. Point out any problems that you find, and feel free to comment more generally on the paper.

**Referee Report Suggestions**

[https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/economics/14-471-public-economics-i-fall-2012/assignments/MIT14\\_471F12\\_RefereeReport.pdf](https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/economics/14-471-public-economics-i-fall-2012/assignments/MIT14_471F12_RefereeReport.pdf)

14.471

Referee Report Suggestions

Here are a few suggestions for referee report writing. For a longer discussion of some of these issues you may wish to consult two papers:

Daniel Hamermesh, "The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette," [Journal of Economic Perspectives](#) 6 (1992), 169-179

William Thompson, "Guidelines on Writing Referee Reports," mimeo, 1998. (available at <http://dirkbergemann.common.yale.edu/files/referee-report-Thompson.pdf>.)

For theory papers, you typically start with a brief overview of what the authors do and a brief summary of the paper's new contribution. After that you provide your thoughts about strengths or weaknesses of the paper. Strengths might include: interesting question not answered before, interesting methodological contribution / new techniques that help to deepen understanding of the issue, new results on an old question, or similar items. Examples of weaknesses might include algebraic or modeling mistakes, demonstrating results that are well

## The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.6.1.169>

### The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette

Daniel S. Hamermesh

JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES  
VOL. 6, NO. 1, WINTER 1992  
(pp. 169-179)

[Download Full Text PDF  
\(Complimentary\)](#)

[Article Information](#) [Comments \(0\)](#)

#### Abstract

Nearly all advanced graduate students and new assistant professors demonstrate naivety in their nonsubstantive professional dealings. Graduate programs in economics offer courses that lead to written drafts of important research; they teach little about how to refine those drafts and, more generally, about the personal interactions that cut and polish intellectual diamonds in the rough. I provide here a short course aimed at removing that naivety and helping young economists to avoid faux pas that might reduce their success in the profession.

## Guidelines on Writing Referee Reports

<https://urresearch.rochester.edu/institutionalPublicationPublicView.action?institutionalItemId=2176>

**Guidelines on Writing Referee Reports****William Thomson**

Rochester Center for Economic Research  
Working Paper No. 451

July 1998

**Instructions and Advice for Referees**

[http://people.bu.edu/rking/JME\\_files/guide\\_for\\_referees.htm](http://people.bu.edu/rking/JME_files/guide_for_referees.htm)

**Instructions and Advice for Referees**

High quality and timely referee reports are essential to the performance of any journal. We wish to thank you in advance for the thought, time and energy that will be going into the report that you are about to prepare.

Most referee reports must ultimately lead to a decision by a JME editor not to publish the manuscript. (Because of space constraints, at least 80% of submitted manuscripts cannot not be published.) At the same time, it is important that the referee and editorial evaluation provide the author with useful feedback on his manuscript even if it is not to be published in the JME.

The four week deadline for JME reports is a firm one. If you know that you will not be able to make it when you receive a review request, please decline the assignment. If you later learn that you will not be able to hit the deadline, please contact the editor that is handling your manuscript, with a copy to Susan North at the editorial office ([north@simon.rochester.edu](mailto:north@simon.rochester.edu)).

**Preparing the report**

In the discussion below, it is assumed that you are preparing a report on an initial submission. **Writing Reports on Resubmissions** provides instructions and advice for reports on second-round manuscripts.

**A. The Audience**

The starting point of any writing project is deciding on the audience. For a JME report, there are really three audience members: (a) the editor; (b) the author; and (c) yourself, as an expert and a representative of the economics community. In the discussion below, we will make suggestions about how to provide the necessary information to each member of the audience.

**B. Reading the paper**

Start by reading the paper quickly so as to get the key ideas. As you go, jot down a few notes about what the authors are doing and the literature context of the paper. Then, think for a while about the big picture -- what are the authors trying to do, are they taking the best approach, and how successful are they at their approach -- and then jot down some further notes about the paper and highlight any major concerns that you had on this first reading.

**Contributing to Public Goods: My 20 Rules for Refereeing**

<https://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/5542>

**Contributing to Public Goods: My 20 Rules for Refereeing**

The development economics blogosphere has been abuzz with talk of refereeing lately. Here are some words of advice from *Quarterly Journal of Economics* editor Larry Katz in an [interview](#) with Berk Özler on the Development Impacts blog, here is [David McKenzie](#) on the same blog, and here is [Chris Blattman](#).

I cannot possibly claim to be among the best referees, but by my count, I have refereed 56 57 papers and two book manuscripts since 2005, and I do take pride in my refereeing, which might explain why I was asked to become associate editor at the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* for 2012-2015.

## How to write a referee report

[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Matthew\\_Turner/ec2410/problems\\_and\\_exams/ref\\_report\\_help.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Matthew_Turner/ec2410/problems_and_exams/ref_report_help.pdf)

**EC2410 Urban Economics**  
How to write a referee report

Matthew A. Turner  
Brown University  
Spring 2018

As part of the course you are asked to write three referee reports. The object of these assignments is fourfold: to describe what the paper does; to describe whether and why the paper is important or interesting; to point out and describe problems in the paper; and finally, to recommend whether the paper should be published in its current form, whether the editor should ask for a revision, or whether the paper should be rejected.

You can say just about anything you want as long as you can back it up and you are polite about it.

The object of a referee report is to partly offer the editor your opinion on the paper and to partly save the editor from reading the paper closely. Given this, it is important that the report be shorter than the paper. For this class, don't go above two pages if you can possibly help it. For real reports, try to keep them short, but longer reports can be OK for good, important papers that can still be improved in lots of ways.

## HOW TO WRITE A GOOD REFEREE REPORT

<https://blog.academicsequitur.com/2019/06/30/how-to-write-a-good-referee-report/>

### HOW TO WRITE A GOOD REFEREE REPORT

POSTED ON JUNE 30, 2019 BY TATYANA

Given the centrality of peer review in academic publishing, it might astonish some to learn that peer review training is not a formal component of any PhD program. Academics largely learn how to do peer review by osmosis: through seeing reports written by their advisors and colleagues, through being on the receiving end of them, and through experience. The result is perhaps predictable: lots of disgruntled researchers and the formation of such groups as "Reviewer 2 must be stopped" on Facebook.

This post is my attempt to make the world a better place by giving some advice on peer review. I have written over 100 reports, and I would like to think I do a

also [Advice by Tatyana Deryugina on twitter](#)

<https://twitter.com/tderyugina/status/1069618226072571904>

I've officially completed 40 referee reports this year, so that (maybe) qualifies me to give some unsolicited advice on referee reports. Thread [↓](#)

翻译推文  
上午7:43 · 2018年12月3日 · Twitter Web Client

87 转推 364 喜欢次数

Tatyana Deryugina @TDeryugina · 2018年12月3日  
回复 @TDeryugina  
First off, if you're getting a lot of requests and you're overwhelmed, you absolutely should turn down reports from the lower end of the journal distribution.

Tatyana Deryugina @TDeryugina · 2018年12月3日  
回复 @TDeryugina  
I turn down requests from journals I wouldn't publish in (unless I know the editor) or when I already have several outstanding reports to do. But that still leaves me with lots of high-quality journals asking for reports.

Tatyana Deryugina @TDeryugina · 2018年12月3日  
回复 @TDeryugina  
The good news is that not every report should take a lot of time. I actually found this load manageable. Here's how I do my reports, largely inspired by

## Tips on Writing a Referee's Report

<http://wayneferson.com/papers/tips.pdf>

## Tips on Writing a Referee's Report

(Dicas para Escrever uma Avaliação de Artigo)

Wayne Ferson\*  
John Matsusaka\*\*

### Abstract

As research academics we spend a substantial amount of time reviewing papers for scholarly journals. While not as important as publishing our own research, the quality of our work as referees is important, both for our profession and for our success as scholars. This note presents some suggestions for writing good referee reports.

## JME

<http://jme.rochester.edu/referees.html>

### The role of reviewers

The *Journal of Monetary Economics* has a long tradition of providing authors with an excellent set of referees that go beyond advising the editors on their final decision, but crucially improve the quality of the research that gets published at the *JME* and elsewhere. The editors thank you in advance for the invaluable service that you will provide to the authors.

High quality and timely referee reports are essential to the performance of any journal. While most manuscripts will ultimately not be published at the Journal, it is important that the referee and editorial evaluation provide the author with useful feedback on his/her manuscript. The deadline for JME reports is a firm one. If you know that you will not be able to make it when you receive a review request, please decline the assignment. If you later learn that you will not be able to hit the deadline, please contact the editor that is handling your manuscript.

### Preparing your report

1. Write a brief summary of the paper at the start that describes the key substantive ideas that the author is trying to convey to the reader.
2. Make sure to highlight what is the marginal contribution of the paper, and whether you think that it is sufficiently important contribution to be published at the *JME*.
3. If there are critical problems with the manuscript, such that the author's analysis is

## Referee Report Guidelines

<https://jmparman.people.wm.edu/342-lecture-slides/referee-report-guidelines-econ-342-s17.pdf>

Econ 342 - Global Economic History

College of William and Mary

John Parman

January 27, 2017

### Referee Report Guidelines

## The Basics of Referee Reports

Referee reports are a critical part of the peer review process in economics. When an article is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, the editor will send the article to several economists familiar with the subject matter for feedback on the quality of the article. These referees evaluate the paper's technical correctness and its overall contribution to the field. This latter criteria is a crucial element: technical correctness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for publication in a journal. Better journals will only publish an article if it makes a novel and substantial contribution to economics. While authors will argue for why their paper is important within the text of the paper, referees provide a critical outside perspective. They offer the editor a candid assessment of whether the article should be published and provide the authors' of the article with comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the paper with suggestions for improvements.

A typical referee report consists of the following components:

## Suggestions on how to write a referee report

[http://www.parisschoolofeconomics.com/zjuravskaya-ekaterina/teaching/2011\\_fall/Report\\_Outline.pdf](http://www.parisschoolofeconomics.com/zjuravskaya-ekaterina/teaching/2011_fall/Report_Outline.pdf)

### Suggestions on how to write a referee report:

The two purposes of the report is to *summarize* a given paper, and offer comments or suggestions to help an author *improve* the paper. Each report should have around 3 pages.

Overall, don't be afraid to have strong opinions (and perhaps be wrong), but *be precise* throughout. Nobody can tell whether you are right or wrong unless you are precise.

#### 1. Summary.

First you summarize the main accomplishments/contributions of the paper. Be objective and do not offer your opinion here. If it is convenient, just list the accomplishments of the paper in outline form. Possible things to describe are:

- The question and goals of the paper
- The theoretical model
- The empirical methodology
- The data being used
- Main results

## Writing a Referee Report

<https://dcpopp.expressions.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/scireferee.pdf>

PAI 776 – Economics of Science and Technology

Professor David Popp

### Writing a Referee Report

Along with the research proposal, Ph.D. students will write a referee report of a working paper in the economics of science and technology. The referee report is an important task for academics. When you submit articles for publication, the work will be refereed, usually by 2-4 anonymous referees, who will provide the journal editor with guidelines as to the submissions quality for publication. I have attached some sample referee reports for you to look at. A typical report is 2-3 pages long. Often, a report begins with 1-2 pages critiquing major points, and then concludes with more random notes on smaller issues that need clarification. Typically, referees will make one of three recommendations. For actual referee reports, these recommendations are not put directly in the report, but rather in a separate letter that goes to the editor. The author should not know each individual referee's decision, but rather the collective decision of the editor. For the case of this assignment, you may simply put the recommendation in the report.

**Reject** – the paper does not meet the standards of the journal, and is unlikely to meet the standards with further revision. The referee report should explain why this is the case. If possible, the referee should also offer suggestions that may improve the paper before it is submitted elsewhere.

**Revise and resubmit** – the paper does not currently meet the standards of the journal, but is likely to do so after revision. The referee report should include suggested revisions.

**Accept** – the paper is suitable for publication as is, or with only minor revisions. It is rare that a first submission to a journal will get a straight acceptance.

## Guidelines for your Referee's Report

<https://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/nfortin/econ560/guidereferee.pdf>

**The University of British Columbia**  
Department of Economics

Economics 560: Economics of Labour

Professor Nicole M. Fortin  
Tuesday, Thursday: 14:00-15:30

Fall 2013  
Buchanan B218

***Guidelines for your Referee's Report***

In the course of this class, you will be asked to write two (2) referee reports on assigned papers that are at the “working paper” stage. As you pursue a career as a professional economist, writing referee reports will become part of your usual duties. As a student, it will give you the opportunity to study a paper in great detail, develop critical thinking skills, and learn about the fine craft of economic writing. Your referee reports should be 3-4 pages long and should include at the end a recommendation to the editor (that normally goes in the cover letter) as to whether the paper should be (1) accepted for publication as it stands, (2) accepted, subject to minor revisions, (3) returned to the author for major revisions, a judgement on publication to be made after resubmission, or (4) rejected. Let’s assume that the paper has been directed at a high level field journal such as the *Journal of Labor Economics* or the *Journal of Human Resources* of which I am a co-editor.

A referee report normally begins with a short summary of the objectives of the paper, and of what the authors have accomplished in the paper. The key questions that you want to answer in this part of the report are: What did the authors view themselves as doing and what did they accomplish? This part should generally be no more than one half-page to one page long, given

## How to be a good referee

[https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2006/10/how\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_goo.html](https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2006/10/how_to_be_a_goo.html)

### How to be a good referee

by Tyler Cowen October 24, 2006 at 9:54 am in Education

Here are my tips:

1. Assume that no referee reports are truly anonymous. It is fine to be critical but always be polite.
2. Unless it is immediate junk, read the paper once and return to it a week later with deeper thoughts and a fresh mind.
3. Your report should not assume that the editor has a working knowledge of the paper in his mind.
4. Respond within a month. First it is considerate to the author. Second, the less "fresh" the task is, the more painful it will be.
5. A properly critical and useful "accept" report is harder to write. Don't look for excuses to quickly reject a potentially good paper.
6. The editor might have chosen you as referee for a reason. You need not go along with the editor's grand plan or desired outcome, but be aware it may exist.
7. Don't check the references to see if you are cited.

## A journal editor speaks about referees (and authors)

<https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/O1l3QF2oe4PTk2zHXQYGVw>

<https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2019/11/a-journal-editor-speaks-about-referees-and-authors.html>

## A journal editor speaks about referees (and authors)

by Tyler Cowen November 22, 2019 at 2:06 am in Economics, Education, Science

### What are the most common errors that reviewers make when reviewing health papers for you?

There are three errors that reviewers make. First, many junior reviewers write really long reviews to show that they were thorough. This doesn't help—if the paper has 8 problems then the editor is often most interested in the top two.

Second, some reviewers can also have really high standards in a way that creates lots of Type II errors—never accepting a paper. At the Review of Economics and Statistics, we were writing to accept more papers, but reviewers made this hard by using an impossible standard for identification.

Finally, and this is rare, but a by-product of the “triple-aim” (described above): some reviewers write reports with innuendo and meanness—I never went back to them and still think very poorly of these individuals. To be mean, when protected by the veil of an anonymous review process, is a deep pathology.

My advice is: write short reviews—don't over referee or rewrite the paper—you are the reviewer, not the author. Be kind. Be kind. Kindness is not the same as low standards, but posing questions and raising challenges with curiosity and humility. Always remember that an editor is reading the review, sharing it with other editors, and one's nastiness is noted and remembered especially when directed towards a new member of the profession.

## Q&A with Larry Katz, editor of QJE

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/qa-with-larry-katz-editor-of-qje>

## Q&A with Larry Katz, editor of QJE

BERK ÖZLER & DAVID MCKENZIE | JANUARY 04, 2012

This page in: English

 The peer-reviewed publication process is something many researchers go through, whether as authors or referees. But we are not always sure how to deal with various decisions, especially earlier in our careers. So, we decided to ask Lawrence Katz, editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, his views on a bunch of things, including some advice for prospective authors and referees alike. He was kind enough to take time from his busy schedule to answer our questions....

   **Development Impact:** Though the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (QJE) receives more than 1,000 manuscripts a year, you manage to provide high quality reviewer reports to the authors within six weeks from submission. Could you please tell us about the process a little bit from submission to decision?

**Larry Katz:** The QJE received 1,430 new submissions in 2011 up from around 1,050 five years ago and from around 400 in the early 1990s when I first started as a QJE editor. We added a fourth editor (Jeremy Stein) this past year (in addition to Robert Barro, Elhanan Helpman, and me) to try to

## How much to referee and how to do it?

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/how-much-to-referee-and-how-to-do-it>

## How much to referee and how to do it?

DAVID MCKENZIE | JANUARY 15, 2012

This page in: English

 I came back from a week off at the start of this year to find 7 referee requests from different journals waiting for me , of which I accepted 5 and turned down 2 – clearly some people are working quickly on that New Year's resolution to send out their papers. Getting so many requests in the same week got me thinking about both how much I want to referee this year and what I can do to be a better referee.

### How much to referee?

First, I thought I'd look back and take stock of how much I'd refereed the last couple of years. Looking through the folder where I store all my old reports, it seems I referred 37 papers last year, and 35 the year before. So about 3 a month on average. It is hard to know how this compares to the workload others are putting in since very little data seems to be available on how much we referee (although Dan Hamermesh has an interesting old (1994) *Journal of Economic Perspectives* article on

## The discussant's art

<https://chrisblattman.com/2010/02/22/the-discussants-art/>

### The discussant's art

22  
FEB  
2010

A colleague and I were lamenting the state of paper discussants the other day. Seldom do we faculty teach graduate students how to be professionals. Even more seldom are we examples of brevity and wit. With that in mind, we came up with a list of tips for the budding academic:

1. **Start by telling people why they should care.** It is seldom obvious. What's the big question, and what's at stake if the paper gets it right or wrong?
2. **Then summarize the paper.** Break it down differently than the presenter. Pretend you are explaining it to your grandmother. Or, rather, your adult-attention-deficit-disorder grandmother. Keep it short.
3. **Say more with less.** Mathematically, everything you say after your best point lowers the average quality of your comment. Pick your three best points, say them briefly, then stop talking.
4. **Now, say even less.** Those three comments? Write out, in bullets, exactly what you plan to say. Now cross out half. What you think will take eight minutes will take fifteen. Bring it back to eight.
5. **Be constructive.** A colleague once said to me: "I like it when people find problems with my paper, but I like solutions more." Finding solutions makes you think (and displays it too).
6. **Don't discuss the small stuff.** Write your little comments down, and later give them to the author. Don't bore

## Referee Guidelines

<http://www.iaae-agecon.org/journal/referee-guidelines>

## Referee Guidelines

If you have been asked to review a paper for *Agricultural Economics*, you will receive an encoded link giving you secure, password-protected access to our Editorial Express web site, where you can accept or decline the request, retrieve the manuscript, communicate with the editors and eventually upload your advice to the editors and your report for the authors. This system is designed to facilitate confidential communication with us, so you can focus on evaluating the quality and value of the manuscript at hand.

### Guidelines for referees at Theoretical Economics

<https://econtheory.org/refereeGuidelines.php>



#### Guidelines for referees at *Theoretical Economics*

Typical Ph.D. programs don't cover the practicalities of writing a good referee report. Here are some guidelines for the young economist. Many people have their own styles. We aim to cover the common principles on which almost everyone agrees.

The primary purpose of the report is to help the Editor make a decision. If a revision is requested, it should then provide sufficient conditions for publication. The referee should show restraint when asking for new material and, indeed, make suggestions for how the paper can be made shorter and more focused. A report typically has the following sections.

### How to read and review an empirical paper

<https://chrisblattman.com/files/2009/07/PLSC508-Syllabus-Spring2010.pdf>

## How to read and review an empirical paper

Questions you can/should address in your reports:

**Research question and hypothesis:**

- Is the researcher focused on well-defined questions?
- Is the question interesting and important?
- Are the propositions falsifiable?
- Has the alternative hypothesis been clearly stated?
- Is the approach inductive, deductive, or an exercise in data mining? Is this the right structure?

**Research design:**

- Is the author attempting to identify a causal impact?
- Is the "cause" clear? Is there a cause/treatment/program/fist stage?
- Is the relevant counterfactual clearly defined? Is it compelling?
- Is the method for doing so clear and compelling? Has statistical inference been confused with causal inference?
- Does the research design identify a very narrow or a very general source of variation?
- Could the question be addressed with another approach?
- Useful trick: ask yourself, "What experiment would someone run to answer this question?"

**Theory/Model:**

## The Refereeing Process in Economics Journals

<https://davegiles.blogspot.com/2018/10/the-refereeing-process-in-economics.html>

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

### The Refereeing Process in Economics Journals

The peer-review process is an essential part of academic publishing. We use it in the hope of ensuring the honesty, novelty, importance, and timeliness of published research. The selection of (usually anonymous) referees by a representative of the journal to which a research paper has been submitted for consideration, and the preparation of the reports/reviews by those referees, are key steps in the overall process of the dissemination of research results.

There are several different "models" when it comes to the refereeing, or peer-review process. Some of these have been described and compared recently, and in detail, [here](#). It's also interesting to note that peer-reviewing is actually a relatively recent phenomenon in most academic disciplines.

## Delia's Guide To Doing Economics

<https://deliasguidetoeconomics.blogspot.com/2017/02/a-referee-report-is-not-mind-dump-about.html>

Sunday, February 5, 2017

## "A referee report is not a mind-dump about the paper."

That is my favorite line in a recent [Journal Economic Perspectives](#) paper on how to write good referee reports. Some of my personal thoughts on the recommendations:

1. Most importantly, I am so happy to get *any* guidance on how to write a referee report. Yes, we can talk about the not-so-ideal incentives referees may have when writing reports, but I think a bigger problem is that we, the referees, are not exactly sure what editors would like to see in referee reports. Until now, most of my thoughts on this have come from reading reports on my own papers, but if everyone just does this, norms determine everything.
2. I do like to see a good, healthy number of robustness tests in a paper, and I kind of like extensions. I think these additional analyses should be done. The question then is how many need to be done by the original authors vs. other researchers in other papers published in less prestigious journals. I don't know the answer to that.
3. The most important piece of practical advice in the paper is to separate comments by

## One example of reports and response

Not For Publication Appendix: Previous Referee Reports, October 2015

**AER Referee Reports** (submitted December, 2014)

**Note:** First I should say that I am greatly indebted to those who took the time to referee my work. My paper has clearly improved substantially due to the comments I have received – hallmarks of good referee reports. My responses to comments are in blue. Also, the page numbers below likely apply to previous drafts, so may have changed. I attach these so that if I happen to get the same referees again, they can see how I changed the paper based on their comments, and also since it might be helpful for referees to see the issues raised by others.

### Referee #1:

#### Referee Report on "Relative Prices, Hysteresis, and the Decline of American Manufacturing"

This paper assesses and quantifies the role of real exchange rates on the decline of American manufacturing. It establishes that real exchange rate movements had a larger effect in employment, output and other variables on manufacturing sectors that were more exposed to trade. The author concludes that "the appreciation of US relative unit labor costs can plausibly explain more than two-thirds of the decline in manufacturing employment in the early 2000s".

**Response:** This is a nice summary. As a note, I would add that I see the chief contribution of the paper as documenting hysteresis (slightly nudging out role of relative price movements in the collapse of manufacturing, which I understand most people will focus on). As stated in the paper, "The chief

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