**Notes on Constructive and Positive Reviewing  
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[Mark Hill](http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~markhill/), University of Wisconsin, Madison  
[Kathryn S McKinley](http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/mckinley/), The University of Texas at Austin

As a reviewer, you represent your community and your review should be professional and constructive. The quality of the **venue (a place where an organized meeting, concert etc. takes place)** depends on the quality of reviews. The job of the reviewer is to select high quality, innovative papers for the venue, *and* to suggest ways to improve the research, as well as to uphold and/or improve on the standards of the community as a whole. For more guidance on the reviewer duties, we also recommend: Alan Jay Smith's [The Task of the Referee (IEEE Computer, 4/90)](http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/mckinley/notes/reviewing-smith.pdf)

A persuasive review includes a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper, and the opinion of the reviewer on which weighs more heavily and why. The remainder of this document contains a few pitfalls and recommendations to help guide reviewers to produce constructive and persuasive reviews.

1. **Pitfall:** Seek to find all flaws in the paper, in part to show your expertise as a reviewer.

**Recommendation:** Look for reasons to accept a paper. Despite its flaws, does it point in new directions or expose promising insights? The community can benefit from imperfect, insightful papers.

1. **Pitfall:** Since the review process is anonymous, it is appropriate to criticize the paper as if the authors did not have feelings.

**Recommendation:** Your tone should be the same as if you are giving comments to a colleague face-to-face. It is always possible to be constructive, focus on the work, and do not attack the researchers behind it. The purpose of a review is not only for selecting papers, but to improve the quality of all the work in our area.

1. **Pitfall:** Reject papers that build on recently-published new directions, but accept those that build on the established norm.

**Recommendation:** While truly new papers are best (and rare), consider accepting papers that follow-up on recently-published promising directions. These papers allow the community to explore ideas that cannot be fully-developed in one paper.

1. **Pitfall:** Advocate rejecting a paper with little comment, because it is obvious that all with agree with you. Ditto for accept.

**Recommendation:** Explain why you advocate a rejection or acceptance, because people will often disagree with you. Your explanations will make you a more effective advocate or detractor for the paper.

1. **Pitfall:** Advocate rejecting (almost) all papers to show about tough you are.

**Recommendation:** Your job is decide what is best which is not usually accomplished by rejecting every submission.

1. **Pitfall:** Advocate rejecting a paper because you seem to remember it being the same as (or similar to) unidentified prior work.

**Recommendation:** In this situation, the professional should reference important prior work after refreshing one's memory regarding what it contains. One missing reference is usually not a reason to reject a paper.