

REVIEWER GUIDE

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This guide is for external volunteer reviewers of MTI journals. Macrothink Institute uses double-blind (double-anonymized) peer review: authors and reviewers are not identified with each other during review. Reviewers provide independent scholarly advice; the editor makes the final decision.

1. Before You Accept an Invitation

- 1) Accept only when the manuscript is sufficiently within your subject or methodological expertise. Tell the editor if your expertise is partial or specialist review is needed.
- 2) Accept only if you can return a careful review by the stated deadline. Decline promptly or request an extension if necessary.
- 3) Disclose any competing interest that could affect, or reasonably appear to affect, your judgment. Examples include recent coauthorship or collaboration, current shared grants, mentor/mentee relationships, employment at the same institution or closely connected unit, financial interests, close personal relationships, active disputes, or direct competitive interests.
- 4) Do not accept a review merely to obtain early access to unpublished work. If a conflict becomes apparent after you accept, stop and contact the editor.
- 5) Do not try to identify the authors. If an author's identity becomes apparent, keep it confidential and notify the editor if the knowledge creates a conflict or could affect impartiality.

2. Confidentiality, Independence, and Professional Conduct

- 1) Treat the manuscript, supplementary files, data, editorial messages, and your review as confidential. Do not share, discuss, post, copy, or use unpublished material for your own research, teaching, funding, commercial activity, or competitive advantage.
- 2) Do not contact the authors directly. Send questions, requests for missing material, and integrity concerns to the editorial office.
- 3) Do not involve a student, colleague, trainee, statistician, translator, or other person without the editor's prior approval. Any approved co-reviewer must be identified to the editor and must follow the same confidentiality and conflict rules.

- 4) Do not upload manuscript or review content to public or external generative-AI/SI, translation, grammar, plagiarism, or other automated services. Do not use AI/SI to generate substantive evaluation or recommendation.
- 5) Be objective, evidence-based, and respectful. Critique the work, not the authors. Avoid personal remarks, sarcasm, discriminatory language, or demands based on personal theoretical, methodological, stylistic, or citation preferences.
- 6) Before returning annotated files, remove your name from comments, tracked changes, document properties, filenames, and other identifying metadata.

3. How to Evaluate the Manuscript

Review only the anonymized manuscript and the supplementary materials specifically released to reviewers. Focus first on issues that affect validity, reliability, originality, interpretation, ethics, or suitability for the journal.

- 1) **Fit and contribution.** Is the manuscript within the journal's aims and scope? Is the research question, thesis, or problem clear and meaningful? Does the work add a defensible scholarly or practical contribution?
- 2) **Originality and prior work.** Is the contribution appropriately distinguished from existing literature? Are novelty claims supported? Flag substantial overlap, redundant publication, or unattributed material if you notice it.
- 3) **Methods or analytical approach.** Are the design, sources, sampling, materials, procedures, coding, measurements, or analytical framework appropriate and sufficiently described? For conceptual or humanities work, assess the logic, source selection, interpretive method, and evidentiary basis.
- 4) **Data, evidence, and analysis.** Are the data or other evidence adequate for the claims? Are statistical, qualitative, computational, or other analyses appropriate and transparent? Are uncertainty, limitations, missing data, bias, and alternative interpretations handled where relevant?
- 5) **Results, discussion, and conclusions.** Are findings presented clearly and consistently across text, tables, and figures? Do the discussion and conclusions follow from the evidence without overstatement? Are limitations and implications addressed?
- 6) **Ethics and transparency.** Where applicable, are ethics approval, informed consent, animal-welfare compliance, permissions, funding, competing interests, data/code availability, acknowledgments, and AI-use disclosures present and credible?

- 7) **References and citation practice.** Are important claims supported by relevant sources? Watch for fabricated references, citations that do not support the stated claim, excessive self-citation, or citation patterns that appear manipulative.
- 8) **Clarity and reporting.** Is the manuscript organized and understandable enough to assess? Identify language problems only when they impede meaning or accuracy; do not line-edit the paper unless specifically requested.

4. Research-Integrity and Ethics Concerns

Reviewers should identify concerns, not conduct investigations. Report specific evidence confidentially to the editor and separate what you observed from what you infer.

- 1) Examples include plagiarism or substantial text overlap; duplicate or simultaneous publication; fabricated, falsified, impossible, or internally inconsistent data; inappropriate image manipulation; missing required ethics approval or consent; privacy or animal-welfare concerns; undisclosed conflicts or funding; authorship concerns; fabricated or manipulated citations; or undisclosed AI/SI use that materially affects the reliability of the work.
- 2) Do not accuse the authors of misconduct in comments intended for them, and do not contact their institution, funder, employer, or other third party. The editor will determine the appropriate next steps under MTI's publication-ethics procedures.

5. Writing the Review Report

- 1) Start with a brief neutral summary of the manuscript's question, approach, and main contribution. This helps the editor see how you understood the work.
- 2) Separate major comments from minor comments. Major comments should address matters that affect validity, interpretation, ethics, originality, or the ability to publish the work. Minor comments should address localized clarification, presentation, or reference issues.
- 3) Number your comments and identify the relevant section, page, paragraph, table, or figure when possible. Explain why each major issue matters and, when practical, what would resolve it.
- 4) Distinguish required revisions from optional suggestions. Do not ask authors to redesign a sound study simply because you would have used another approach.
- 5) Suggest additional references only when directly relevant and necessary. Never require citation of your own work, the journal, the editor, or associates for the purpose of increasing citations or visibility.

- 6) Keep comments to authors consistent with your recommendation. Use confidential comments to the editor for conflicts, suspected misconduct, identity concerns, legal/safety matters, limitations in your expertise, or information that should not be sent to the authors.

6. Recommendation to the Editor

Use the decision category shown in the submission system. The editor may reach a different decision; reviewer recommendations are advisory.

Accept: The manuscript is publishable as submitted apart from negligible editorial corrections. Use sparingly.

Minor Revision: The work is sound overall; limited corrections or clarifications are needed and do not change the central design, analysis, argument, or conclusions.

Major Revision: Substantial but reasonably correctable changes are needed for validity, completeness, reporting, analysis, interpretation, or presentation.

Reject and Invite Resubmission: The current manuscript requires fundamental reworking, but a substantially revised new submission may merit consideration if this option is offered.

Reject: Fundamental problems are not reasonably correctable, the work lacks sufficient fit or contribution, conclusions are unsupported, or serious unresolved ethical/integrity concerns remain.

7. Revised Manuscripts, Deadlines, and Completion

- 1) For a revision, read the authors' response and the revised manuscript. Reassess prior major concerns fairly; accept a reasoned rebuttal when it is supported by evidence. Avoid introducing new requirements unless a new material issue becomes apparent.
- 2) If you cannot meet the deadline or complete a later review round, notify the editor promptly. A careful review delivered slightly later is preferable to a superficial report submitted only to meet a deadline.
- 3) After the review is complete, retain no unnecessary manuscript files. Confidentiality continues after editorial decision and after publication.

Publication Policies and Ethics

- 1) [MTI Publication Policies](#)
- 2) [MTI Ethics Statement](#)
- 3) [COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#)