# The Refereeing Process

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# REVIEWING A SCIENTIFIC PAPER ==

1. AS A REFEREE, YOU HAVE SPECIAL ANONYMOUS POWERS. BE VAGUE BUT FORCEFUL.

Description inadequate. Rewrite pages 2-10.



2. IF YOU DON'T REALLY FEEL LIKE REVIEWING, IT IS ACCEPTABLE TO LEAVE A MOSAIC OF COFFEE RINGS ON EVERY SECOND PAGE.

STAMP



3. IN TODAY'S BUSY WORLD IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO LIST EVERY LITTLE FLAW. PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES CAN BE QUICKLY IDENTIFIED USING BITE NOTATION.



4. SHREDDING CAN BE USED TO PROVIDE SUBTLE EMPHASIS FOR YOUR MAIN POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT.



#### The referee's job

- Quality control
- Check correctness
- Judge originality
- Judge importance
- Summarise for the editor
- ▶ Point out missing literature
- Gauge suitability for the journal
- Comment on language and readability

#### Who are the referees?

- Usually one or two experts
- Chosen by the editor
- Academics like you
- Volunteers
- Busy people
- Clever people
- ▶ People (sometimes biased, vain, annoying, incompetent etc.)

## What does the referee get out of it

- Warm inner glow from doing their duty
- ▶ May learn something about
  - ▶ the subject
  - how to write papers
- Get news of discoveries earlier
- Kudos
  - Can put on CV which journals you've refereed for
  - Impress the editors

#### Pitfalls to avoid

- Stealing ideas
- Breaching confidentiality
- Revealing your identity
- Accepting something you aren't interested in or qualified for
- ► Taking too long
- Conflicts of interest
  - Personal
  - Professional
- Imposing your prejudices
- Writing the paper for them
- Becoming a co-author

## How to deal with awkward reports



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

- Let off steam
- Ask yourself why they said that
- ▶ Don't argue with the umpire
- Make all changes that you can stomach
- Justify not making other changes
- ▶ Realise if one person has misunderstood, others will
- Be polite

#### Do your referees a favour

- Structure your paper
- Make your motivation clear
- Write clear short sentences
- Introduce ideas in logical order
- Get feedback before submission
- ▶ If your English is weak, get assistance
- Beware ambiguity
- Proofread
- Proofread again!