

How to Deal with Reviewers' Comments

- Breathe. Relax. Get a cup of decent coffee. Avoid rushing through the comments at top speed, especially if you feel that they are critical and you are having an emotional reaction. Just relax.
- Read the editor's comments first. Figure out if there is anything useful in there; always do what the editor asks you to do.
- Read the referee comments slowly and analytically. First, focus on those that are clearly useful: fixing flaws, carrying out extra experiments, providing more evidence, being clearer. Even if these mean a lot of work, they will make your paper better.
- Then, read the rest of the referee comments—including the silly ones—with your psychologist hat on. What would make the referees happy? The key is to always make the referees feel that they have been heard, even when you choose not to do what they ask you to do (or when you don't even understand what that is).
- Fix flaws, carry out new experiments, do new analyses. Revise your paper accordingly. For every referee comment, change something in the manuscript. This can be just a single sentence!
- Tip: if a referee asks you to do something tangential that you don't want to do—sometimes referees come up with creative but annoying ideas—just add a sentence to the Discussion where you mention the idea as a possible future direction.
- Write a polite, detailed, and long response to the referees. Respond to each and every comment; if you have chosen not to do what the referee asks, write a detailed counterargument and explain why.
- This is worth repeating: always be polite and thank the referees, even when you disagree with the referees. It's OK to disagree, of course—but do thank the referee for bringing up the point (and if you can, revise something in the manuscript, e.g. add a sentence). Your target is to get the paper accepted, not to display your intellectual superiority (or to sheepishly follow every suggestion down to the letter).
- Resubmit & keep your fingers crossed!

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