

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

About the review process in *Physical Review C*

Peer review by an independent, anonymous referee is one of the most important reasons for the existence of a scientific journal. The journal reader benefits in that at least one independent expert has judged the paper to be interesting, to contribute to the advancement of the field, and to be without apparent flaws. Of course, it is impossible for either the journal or the referee(s) to guarantee the correctness or the originality of the research. The author benefits from feedback regarding the research and style of presentation as well as from pride in a refereed publication.

Because scientific research is a human enterprise we must all rely upon one another, as authors and referees, to do our best. Below are some frequently asked questions (FAQ) concerning the review process. For more information, please consult the *Physical Review C* Editorial Policies and Practices which are available via the journal home page at <http://prc.aps.org/>, or directly at <http://prc.aps.org/info/polprocc.html>. For further comments and questions contact the editor at prc@aps.org.

How Are Referees Chosen?

The editor and associate editors choose one or more referees from a common database of thousands of potential referees. This database has no borders between different areas of physics. The editors choose referees based on many factors including a referee's area of expertise and availability (we usually don't consult referees who are currently reviewing another manuscript), quality of reports, and response time.

Can I Suggest Individuals to Review My Paper?

You most certainly can! In fact, it helps the editors if you suggest knowledgeable individuals. However, generally, the editors will not select people who are at the same institution as one of the authors; who have been a frequent coauthor in the past; who are currently reviewing another manuscript or have reviewed one very recently; or who have been overworked in the past year as a referee for APS journals.

Can I Exclude Individuals from Reviewing My Paper?

Yes; please send your request when you submit your manuscript. Please give the names of specific people, not names of research groups, collaborations, or institutions. The editors would appreciate a brief explanation, but it is not required. (See also the next FAQ.)

How Many Referees Review My Paper?

Usually the editors choose one person to initially review your paper. However, if it comments negatively on another published paper, then an author of that paper may be asked to provide a *signed* advisory opinion. If a referee is tardy, then the editors may choose also a second referee, and we may receive more than one anonymous report. If an impasse is reached between author(s) and referee, then the editors may consult another referee in an effort to close the review process. This may happen at any time while the manuscript is under review.

How Many Revisions Will I Have to Make?

The editors seek to reach a final decision after one or two rounds of revisions and/or rebuttal. You have a least one opportunity to revise the manuscript and convince the referee that your paper warrants publication. If the referee recommends that the work has merit, then the editors will ask you to make all remaining revisions before a final round of review.

Can I Request a Second Referee?

Yes; see the FAQs above. Generally, the handling editor will grant this request if he or she feels that an impasse has been reached. Since the referees are chosen because of their familiarity with the subject matter of the manuscript, they are usually better qualified than the Editors to evaluate its scientific merits. The authors must persuade the referee, not the Editors, that a paper should be accepted.

Can a Referee Reject My Paper?

No; only the editor can reject your paper, upon the recommendation of an associate editor and after an appropriate review process has been completed.

What Should I Do When a Referee Criticizes My Paper?

Read the referee report carefully and dispassionately. Approach the report with an open mind. What may at first seem like a devastating blow is perhaps a request for more information or for a more detailed explanation. At other times the referee may indeed have found a fatal flaw in the research or logic. Put yourself in the position of a reader, which is exactly the position of the referee. Is the paper well written? Is the presentation clear, unambiguous, and logical? Respond to *all* comments, suggestions, and criticisms of the referee(s). Explain which changes have been made and state your position on points of disagreement. In our experience, appropriate response to some referee comments may require more research or even reconsideration of the research project.

Why Does the Referee Ask Me to Cite So Many Papers?

Assign credit where credit is due. Not only is it proper and customary to cite previous work on the topic of your research, it also demonstrates your knowledge of the subject. Moreover, it helps the less knowledgeable reader to understand the history of the subject and how your work contributes to the advancement of the field. Finally, since more and more papers are hyperlinked, more people can find your paper if you cite all relevant papers; eventually, your paper will be cited more often.

Why Does My Paper Sit in the Office So Long Without Any Apparent Activity?

Most *Physical Review C* papers are handled by editors who do not reside at the Ridge office. Having active research scientists as remote editors has important benefits for a society journal but leads to additional processing steps and, hence, editorial time. Improvements are underway to reduce any transit time, but 'professional distractions,' such as conferences and review committees, are sometimes unavoidable.

What Can I Do to Speed the Acceptance and Publication of My Paper?

First and foremost, spend the time and effort to write a paper that is clear and grammatically correct. If English is not your native language, consider asking someone else to proofread your paper before submission. Triple-check the manuscript *before* you submit it.

Second, if you receive a referee report requesting changes, do your best to respond to *all* of the points raised and detail the changes made in your resubmission letter. Take the comments and criticisms of the referee(s) very seriously. The referee is most likely one of your most interested readers.

After you receive a referee report, respond to it quickly and accurately if you desire rapid acceptance.

Finally, if you are a referee, please send in your referee reports on another author's paper as quickly as you wish another referee would review your own.