

Guide for Action Editors of *Neural Networks*

Including Further Instructions on Editorial Manager

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Editorial Manager (EM) is designed for a large number of journals by Elsevier, and it offers a lot of functions for a variety of needs. Below, we address common confusions and questions by AEs (action editors). In addition, we suggest some best practices (e.g., how to identify and select reviewers) which should be particularly useful for new AEs.

Although not specifically written for *Neural Networks*, the EM Editor Help on the journal website (<https://www.editorialmanager.com/neunet/>) under **Help** in the banner menu at the top of the page, is still helpful. The site also provides video tutorials on specific topics, and should be especially helpful to new AEs. Note, they do not separate instructions for Editors-in-Chief (EICs) and those for AEs.

The following guide is designed to complement the EM Guides, rather than replace them, and it addresses the following list of topics:

1. How to identify reviewers
2. How to invite reviewers
3. How many reviewers to invite initially
4. How to recognize and avoid bad reviewers
5. How do automatic reviewer reminders work
6. How do AE reminders work
7. Where to enter AE comments
8. How to reject an MS without review
9. How to make a recommendation with conflicting reviews
10. How to assign reviewers for a “Revised and Reconsider” MS
11. How to make a recommendation on a “Revised and Reconsider” MS
12. How to make a recommendation on a “Revised and Accept” MS
13. How to rescind a recommendation
14. How to get Help

This AE Guide is meant to be an evolving document summarizing the best practices for *Neural Networks*, and do not hesitate to contact the Co-EICs if you have suggestions for improvement or tips to share.

1. How to identify reviewers?

(This part is constantly updated in EM. The following is unlikely up to date, but should contain useful contents.)

Identifying appropriate reviewers (and securing their agreement) is the most important role of an AE. There are a number of ways to do it:

- The author can suggest reviewers, and they sometimes do. You can find their suggestions under **Details** of the Action link, or through the Reviewer Summary Screen under **Invite Reviewers** as illustrated below:

The screenshot displays the 'Reviewer Selection Summary' for submission **ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00030** by Charles Critic. The manuscript title is 'Doppler-Derived Echocardiographic Evidence of Pulmonary Hypertension in Cats with Left-Sided Congestive Heart Failure'. The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options, a 'Reviewer Search' section with a search bar and filters, a 'Review Settings' section with completion and response time options, and sections for 'Invited Reviewers and Linked Alternate Reviewers' and 'Alternate Reviewers'. A browser window below shows the URL: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/elstraining1/viewAuthorsReviewerPreferences.aspx?docid=38&revision=0>.

The 'Author's Reviewer Preferences' dialog box is shown. It has a 'Close' button at the top. Below it is a section titled 'Suggested Reviewers' which lists: Tom TEST Thomas, Elsevier, test@tomtest.com. There is another 'Close' button at the bottom of the dialog.

Their suggested names may be reasonable choices. Of course, their suggestions are meant to be just suggestions, and use your judgment to select objective reviewers.

- The reference list of a manuscript (MS) often contains names that are appropriate reviewers. As their papers are referenced in this MS, they tend to be motivated to review (as well as being knowledgeable).

- Your network. As a recognized expert in the field, you would know active researchers who would make reliable reviewers. Your network will grow as your experience grows as an AE.
- Search the Elsevier database. Tips for finding reviewers from an online database are displayed on the **Reviewer Summary Screen**. There are several ways to search for reviewers by matching reviewer expertise and MS topic classifications.

Reviewer Selection Summary - Submission ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00030

Charles Critic

Doppler-Derived Echocardiographic Evidence of Pulmonary Hypertension in Cats with Left-Sided Congestive Heart Failure

The screenshot shows a web interface for finding reviewers. At the top, there's a 'Reviewer Search' section. On the left, there's a radio button for 'Search My Publication' which is selected. Below it is a 'Review Settings' section with a minus sign icon. In the center, a dropdown menu titled 'Search for Reviewers' is open, listing four options: 'Suggested by Author', 'Search by Classification Matches', 'Search by Personal Classifications', and 'Suggest Reviewers'. To the right of the dropdown, there's a 'from' dropdown menu currently set to 'All Reviewers' and a 'Go' button.

- Suggested by Author: As mentioned above, this action will search the database for the names that are provided by the author. If they are registered in the system, you will have the option to select them. If they are not registered in the system, you will be provided the option to register them.
- Classification Matches: This will find reviewers who have classifications that match the classifications of the submission.
- Personal Classifications: Search for reviewers that have a particular classification. This search is not based on a match to the submission, but classifications specified by you.
- Suggest Reviewers: You can ask the system to suggest reviewers from the database based on criteria that you set:

Return to New Editor Assignments
Return to Main Menu

View Submission Information
Manuscript Details ▾

History
View Submission
Author's Reviewer Preferences

Quick Action Links
Submit Editor's Decision and Comments
Send E-mail
Register and Select New Reviewer
Search Similar Articles in MEDLINE

Set Preferences
My Suggest Reviewer Preferences
My Reviewer Display Preferences

Reviewer Selection Summary - Submission ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00030

Charles Critic
Doppler-Derived Echocardiographic Evidence of Pulmonary Hypertension in Cats with Left-Sided Congestive Heart Failure

Reviewer Search

Search My Publication Search for Reviewers from All Reviewers

Review Settings

This Submission will move to the 'Submissions with Required Reviews Complete' folder as soon as 2 [\[Change\]](#) review(s) have been completed.
Automatically un-invite Reviewers who do not respond to an invitation within 14 [\[Change\]](#) day(s). [\(more...\)](#)
Automatically un-assign Reviewers who do not complete a review within 0 [\[Change\]](#) day(s) of the review due date. [\(more...\)](#)

Selected Reviewers

Invited Reviewers and Linked Alternate Reviewers

There are currently no Reviewers Invited in the list.

My Suggest Reviewer Preferences

Exclude the following from the list:

People from the same institution
 People from the same city

People with unavailable dates within the next days
People with more than pending reviews
People with fewer than matches to manuscript classifications

Sort the Candidate Reviewer list in order of importance by:

- Board membership
- Number of matches to manuscript classifications
- Number of pending reviews
- Average number of days reviews are outstanding
- Date last review completed
- Average Review Rating (Highest Ratings listed first)
- Total Number of Completed Reviews (Highest number displayed first)

- Generally speaking, we discourage asking other AEs to serve as reviewers as they are already busy coordinating reviews of their assigned manuscripts. This does not mean that they should never be asked, and there are submissions for which they are uniquely qualified or are clearly interested in reviewing.
- Occasionally, you may handle an MS for which it is very hard to secure reviewers. In such cases, you might find it necessary to rely on the help of your former/current

postdocs and senior doctoral students. Sometimes you might find it more convenient to simply review the MS yourself.

2. How to invite reviewers?

- By clicking **Invite Reviewers** action, you are brought to the Reviewer Selection Summary page where you can perform search. Clicking the **GO** button with the default search criterion **Search for Reviewers**, you enter a search page where you can use reviewer names, email addresses, etc., to search for specific reviewers, or you can search by the other options highlighted above. Once identified, you simply choose a specific reviewer. Then you either send an invitation to the reviewer by checking “Inv.” or assign the reviewer to a submission by checking “Asn.”, and proceed. Note that “Assigning” will not give the reviewer the option to decline to review.

| Select As | | | | Reviewer Name |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Inv. | Asn. | Alt. | Prop. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amy Analyst  (Reviewer) |

- If multiple accounts exist for a specific reviewer, it is important that you check their profiles to make sure that the one with the **correct email address** is invited. Otherwise, all sorts of problems occur, including email bounces, etc. Note that it is not easy to remove a reviewer account, and you cannot change what is contained in a reviewer account.
- If the reviewer does not exist in the EM, you will need to use the **Register and Select New Reviewer** function (see tutorials). It is very easy to register a new reviewer, but make sure that you type in the **correct email address** to avoid the issues mentioned above.
- If a reviewer account exists, and you know that the email address is wrong (e.g. via an email bounce), the easiest way to handle this situation is to register the reviewer again by using the correct email address. To benefit other AEs, request removal of the account with the wrong email address by emailing: support@elsevier.com.
- **TIP:** how to send an invitation to **multiple reviewers in one batch**? EM will remember your reviewer selections as long as you do not navigate away from the search results page. If you perform a search and only want to select one reviewer from that particular search, check “Inv.” or “Asn.” next to their name to select them. You can then perform additional searches to select more reviewers. When you have finished your selections, click “Proceed” and all of the selections from your searches should appear on the confirmation screen.

3. How many reviewers to invite initially?

- As specified in the AE assignment email, we should secure at least 3 review reports even though two is the minimum number required before making an AE recommendation. There are many reasons for having more than 2 reports, e.g. avoiding the situation where the two reports contradict one another. To be efficient, we recommend that you initially invite 4-5 reviewers in case one or more reviewers decide not to review.

- To avoid overburdening authors during revision, a submission should not have more than five reviews.
4. How to recognize and avoid bad reviewers
- There are bad reviewers whose reports have a pattern of being too generic as to apply to all submissions, too self-serving (e.g., asking authors to quote their papers without justification), or too cursory.
 - Such reviewers are flagged in EM with the boldface symbol: **X** (called forbidden reviewer). Do not invite them.
5. How do reviewer reminders work?
- We have set up automatic reminders for all AEs. Here is how reminders are sent:
 - **Review invitation** reminder: this is sent 7 days after your invitation if the reviewer does not respond. The reminder is repeated every 7 days afterward.
 - **Before due date** reminder: this is sent 5 days before the review due date (only once).
 - **Past due date** reminder: this is sent 5 days past the due date. This reminder is repeated every 7 days afterwards.
 - You can send additional reminders yourself by navigating to the bottom of your AE Main Menu, to **Administrative Functions** and clicking “**Send Reminder Letters,**” and then clicking **Reviewer Reminder Reports**. There you will see reminders already set up, and can send your own reminders.
 - Automatically uninvite a reviewer. When a reviewer does not respond to a review invitation several days after two reminders (e.g., 18 days from the original invitation), he or she can be automatically uninvited (an un-invitation notice is sent to the reviewer). There is also the option to un-assign a reviewer after they have accepted the review invitation but have not completed the review within a certain amount of time after the due date has passed. This can be configured in the Reviewer Selection Summary screen shown below.

Reviewer Selection Summary - Submission ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00020

Jack Hill
TF March 7, how to find reviewers

Reviewer Search
 Search My Publication Search for Reviewers from All Reviewers

Review Settings
This Submission will move to the 'Submissions with Required Reviews Complete' folder as soon as 2 [\[Change\]](#) review(s) have been completed.
Automatically un-invite Reviewers who do not respond to an invitation within 14 [\[Change\]](#) day(s). [\(more...\)](#)
Automatically un-assign Reviewers who do not complete a review within 0 [\[Change\]](#) day(s) of the review due date. [\(more...\)](#)

Selected Reviewers
Invited Reviewers and Linked Alternate Reviewers
Sally Solicitor (Reviewer) **Reviewer Invited** [Un-invite](#)
Mar 07, 2019

Alternate Reviewers
 Robert Reviewer (Reviewer) 

[Alternate Reviewer Invitation Letters](#)
Alternate Reviewers will be promoted automatically. [\(more...\)](#)

6. How do AE reminders work?

- EM does not have the function of automatically reminding non-responding AEs. This is done **manually** by the EIC office. Even though you get an automatic-looking reminder through EM, it is actually done manually after we have identified an AE delay. As you can imagine, keeping track of a large number of submissions and identifying various delays takes a lot of time and effort for the EIC office. So please respond to your assignments and handle reviews in a timely fashion.
- If an AE reminder does not result in an action in a few days, the EIC will follow up with the AE through email outside of EM. Hope you won't get such nagging emails from us!

7. Where to enter AE comments?

- EM does not have a dedicated textbox for entering AE justification for a particular recommendation, unfortunately. The way to do it is to enter your justification in the **Comments to Author** box, which will be viewable to author just like review comments. Please start your justification with "Action Editor:" or "AE:" so that the author clearly knows which are AE comments and which are reviewer comments (enter your comments intended for the EIC only in the "Confidential Comments to Editor" box).
- It is required that you provide some rationale to accompany **every** recommendation, no matter how brief it is. Reviewer reports serve as a basis for you to make a recommendation, your expert rationale should be more substantive than a majority vote.

This way, the author gets the whole picture rather than just comments from individual reviewers.

- Refrain from using Elsevier templates as your AE rationale, as they are too generic to be helpful to authors.
- Even though we reject most of the submissions, AE comments should be **constructive and helpful** to authors, as part of our mission is to serve them.
- Sometimes, reviewers by mistake enter their reports in the box of “Confidential Comments to Editor”. If you see this mistake, please move the relevant text to the box of “Comments to Author”.
- AE is anonymous to authors. If you want to make yourself known to authors, simply state your name when you enter your justification (as some AEs have elected to do).

8. How to reject an MS without review?

- The AE in charge can recommend rejection without sending the MS to reviewers. This option should be used with detailed AE justification, as one of the functions of peer review is to provide useful feedback to authors even if the MS is to be rejected.
- Note that EIC office also rejects MSs without assigning any AE. Such submissions tend to be of the following kinds: (a) Out of the journal scope; (b) Poorly prepared; (c) Speculative with inadequate data (typically by amateurs); (d) Student term papers with trivial results; and (e) Narrowly focused applications better suited for the application domain.

9. How to make a recommendation with conflicting reviews

- We receive a large number of submissions and can publish only a fraction of them. Therefore, the standards for inviting a revision and subsequent acceptance are high. On the other hand, a single reviewer should not hold the veto power on a submission. In the case of conflicting reviews, we rely on the AE’s expert judgement.
- To justify a revision recommendation, positive reviews need to outweigh and outnumber negative reviews. In the case of just two reviews, one of which is negative, the AE can make a rejection recommendation by providing a substantive AE rationale, or secure at least one more review before making a recommendation.

10. How to assign reviewers for a “Revised and Reconsider” MS?

- Generally speaking, the same reviewers should be asked to review a revised MS. EM provides the option to select from previous reviewers when inviting reviewers for the revised submission.

Reviewer Selection Summary - Submission ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00030R1

Doppler-Derived Echocardiographic Evidence of Pulmonary Hypertension in Cats with Left-Sided Congestive Heart Failure

Charles Critic

Reviewer Search

- Search for Reviewers
- Suggested by Author
- Search by Classification Matches
- Search by Personal Classifications
- Suggest Reviewers
- Select from Previous Reviewers

Search My Publication

Go

The selection will default to the letter template "Reviewer Invitation for Revision", which provides a useful reminder that this is an MS he/she reviewed before, and also specifies a shorter review period.

Select Reviewers - Confirm Selection and Customize Letters

Submission ELSTRAINING1-D-19-00030R1

Charles Critic

"Doppler-Derived Echocardiographic Evidence of Pulmonary Hypertension in Cats with Left-Sided Congestive Heart Failure"

You have selected the following people as potential Reviewers ([more...](#))

Previously Submitted Reviews

The following reviews have been submitted. You may include a copy of each Reviewer's comments in invitations to new Reviewers by clicking the checkbox. These comments will display in invitation letters if the appropriate Reviewer comment merge fields are used. To see the comments, click the Reviewer's name. Customize each letter to edit the comment text that will be seen by the Invited Reviewer, but note that customizing a letter creates a fixed copy of that letter that is not affected by subsequent changes to your selections.

Please select any previously submitted reviews for inclusion before customizing invitation letters.

Current Submission

Amy Analyst (Original)

Reviewers to Invite

| Name | Letter | Days to Review | Do Not Invite |
|------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| Amy Analyst (Reviewer) | Reviewer Invitation on Revision Customize | 21 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Change Selections

Cancel

Confirm Selections and Proceed

Dropdown list

- For a revised submission we **strongly** recommend that you assign (check "Asn"), instead of invite (i.e. "Inv."), a previous reviewer. We can safely assume that the reviewer will agree to evaluate the revised version, having reviewed an original submission and recommended a revision. This way, we save a step in the review process, which helps to speed up the review cycle.
- You also have the option to include the reviewer's previous comments with the assignment letter.

11. How to make a recommendation on a "Revised and Reconsider" MS?

- Generally speaking, we should avoid making a Revise and Reconsider decision more than once. If a revised version still requires substantial revision, it should be rejected and the author should be encouraged to make a new submission after taking the time to address the criticisms.

12. How to make a recommendation on a “Revised and Accept” MS?

- Except for unusual situations, such a revised MS should not be returned to the reviewers for another round of review. The revised MS should be checked by the AE only.

13. How to rescind a recommendation?

- After you have made a recommendation on an MS, but before the handling EIC has made a decision, you can rescind your recommendation. This will move the MS back to your AE account.
 - In your AE account, first click “My Assignments with Decision”.
 - Then select “Rescind Decision” from the Action Links dropdown list of the MS.

14. How to get Help?

- In addition to clicking the “Help” link on the AE’s Main Menu. You can also email the support team at support@elsevier.com.
- If you prefer a single point of contact, email journal manager at: mn@elsevier.com (currently Sharanya Mukundan).

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