Guide for Action Editors of *Neural Networks*

Including Further Instructions on Editorial Manager

Last revised, July 28, 2019

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 Help Guide for Editors on the journal website (https://www.editorialmanager.com/neunet/) under Help in the banner menu at the top of the page, is still very helpful:

![Editorial Manager](image)

The site also provides tutorials on specific topics, and is a must read for new AEs. The icon indicated below will take you to a full video library that contains instructions for any tasks you may need to complete.

![Video Library](image)

Note, this does 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 do automatic reviewer reminders work
5. How do AE reminders work
6. Where to enter AE comments
7. How to assign reviewers for a “Revised and Reconsider” MS
8. How to make a recommendation on a “Revised and Reconsider” MS
9. How to make a recommendation on a “Revised and Accept” MS
10. How to reject an MS without review
11. 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?
   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:
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 ELTRAINING1-D-19-00030**

- 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:
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.

   ![Reviewer Selection Table]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select As</th>
<th>Inv.</th>
<th>Asn.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reviewer Name</strong></td>
<td>Amy Analyst</td>
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   • 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 recommend securing 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 more efficient, we recommend that you initially invite 4-5 reviewers in case one or more reviewers decide not to review.
4. How do reviewer reminders work?

- We have set up automatic reminders for all AEs. Here is how reminders are sent:
  
  o **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.
  
  o **Before due date** reminder: this is sent 5 days before the review due date (only once).
  
  o **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 Selection Summary](image)

Automatically un-invite reviewers who do not respond to an invitation within 14 days. (more...)

Automatically un-assign reviewers who do not complete a review within 0 day(s) of the review due date. (more...)
5. 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!

6. Where to enter AE comments?
   • EM does not have a separate text box for entering AE justification for a particular recommendation. 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 important that you enter some justification for your recommendation, no matter how brief it is. This way, the author is given an overall opinion rather than just comments from individual reviewers.
   • 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).

7. 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](image)

   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.
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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. How to get Help?

- The Help guide is available by clicking the “Help” link on the top left of the AE’s Main Menu. You can also email the support team at support@elsevier.com, or schedule a one-on-one training session.

- You can also get help via phone or live chat using the links at the bottom of the support hub page: https://service.elsevier.com/app/home/supporthub/publishing/.

- If you prefer a single point of contact, email journal manager Jefeery Alwyn (nn@elsevier.com or j.alwyn@elsevier.com).