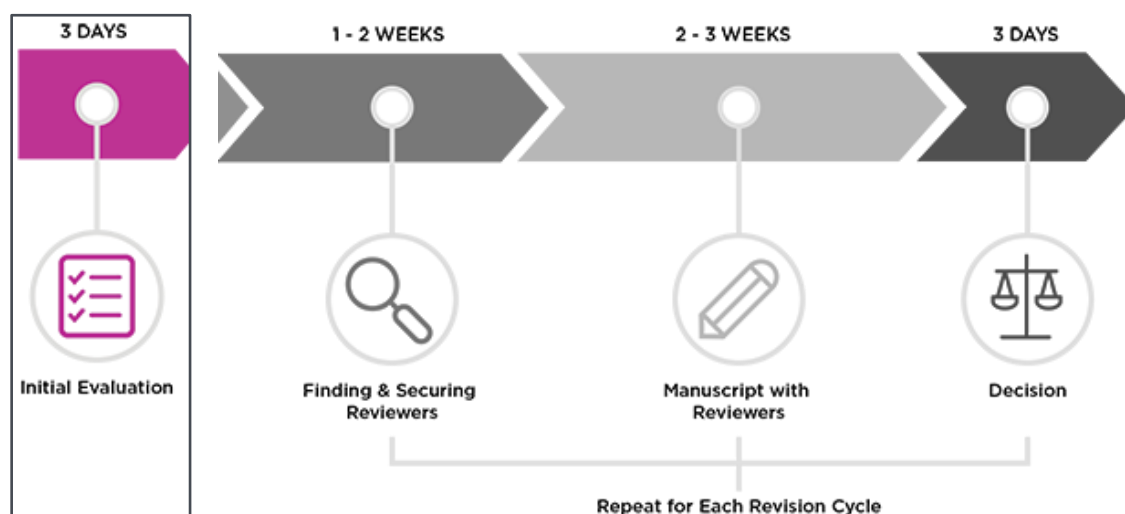


Initial Evaluation

Applies to: [PLOS Complex Systems](#) | [PLOS Computational Biology](#) | [PLOS Digital Health](#) | [PLOS Genetics](#) | [PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases](#) | [PLOS Pathogens](#) | [PLOS Sustainability and Transformation](#)



Key Takeaways & Contents

- Assess the manuscript using:
 - The scope and publication criteria [Go to: [Scope and Publication Criteria](#)]
 - Your own subject area expertise
- Decide whether to send out for peer review or reject without review [Go to: [Peer Review or Reject?](#)]



Scope and Publication Criteria

During your initial evaluation, assess whether the manuscript represents sound science, is of interest to the community, and fits within the scope and publication criteria.

Be sure to read your journal's information page to familiarize yourself with the scope and publication criteria. It can also be helpful to see what other papers have been published to understand the caliber and topics of past studies.

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 Scope Criteria for Publication	 Scope Criteria for Publication	 Scope Criteria for Publication	

Peer Review or Reject?

If a manuscript clearly doesn't meet the publication criteria, it's ok to reject without inviting external reviewers. In your [decision letter](#) to the authors, please ensure you have provided enough information for the authors to understand the reason for the decision, clearly articulating your reasoning and citing the specific publication criteria that were not met.

If you decide to proceed with peer review, keep in mind that **all manuscripts must be evaluated by external reviewers (preferably three) before they are accepted for publication.** Generally, you should decide on your next action within **four days** of agreeing to handle the manuscript.

Reject and transfer when

- The paper is not suitable for your journal but may be appropriate for [another PLOS journal](#).

Reject without review when

- There are serious methodological or analytical flaws that cannot be addressed by peer review
- Conclusions are unsupported by the data
 - For example, insufficient sample sizes
- Flawed, weak, or insufficiently detailed hypothesis, study rationale, methods, analyses, or results would prevent reviewers from properly evaluating the work
- The work is redundant without clearly referencing and discussing the existing literature
- Apparent revisions would take the authors more than a few months to complete
 - This could include additional experiments, extensive reframing or recontextualization of the work, or extensive reanalysis.
 - An open reject with an invitation to resubmit can be considered when extensive revisions are required that would exceed the usual 45-day major revision deadline.

 **In all other situations, please seek external peer review.**

If you would like a second opinion, open a discussion with the Section Editor or another Academic Editor. Instructions on how to open and participate in a discussion are in our [Guide to Editorial Manager](#).



Next **Quick Guide** : [Finding & Securing Reviewers](#) OR [Assessing Reviews & Making Decisions](#)

Links to more Resources for Editors

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