

# Review editor guidelines

Welcome to Frontiers' community of editors.

The following guidelines provide you with practical information about your role as a review editor and our peer review process and platform.

Please feel free to contact the journal team directly using their field editorial office email address if you have any queries.

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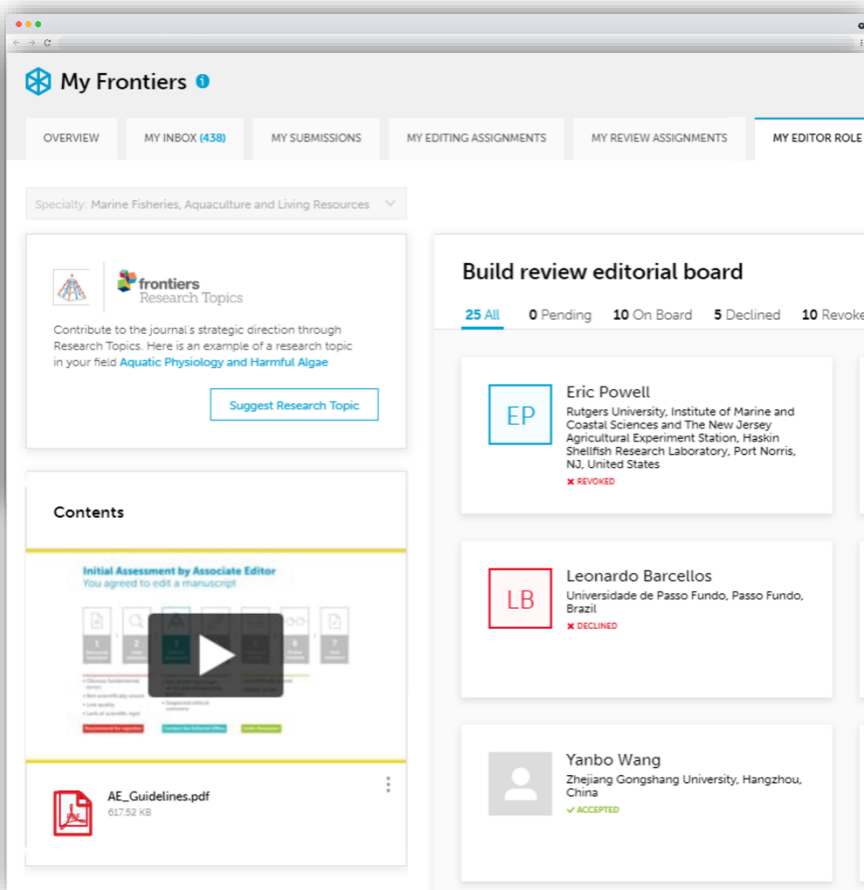
NOTE: The following guidelines mention both “Review editors” and “reviewers”. While the former specifically refers to review editors on the editorial board, the latter encompasses both review editors and external reviewers invited by the associate editors to review specific manuscripts.

## 1 REVIEW EDITORS

The primary role of review editors is to act as reviewers in the peer-review of submitted manuscripts.

Along with associate editors, review editors are the key persons of the Frontiers review process, since they are responsible for certifying the validity and accuracy of publications, and for helping authors to improve the quality of their manuscripts as well as the way in which the research is communicated.

When joining our community of review editors, please familiarize yourself with these guidelines and watch the video linked in the Frontiers platform to get a clear view of your role in peer review at Frontiers\*.



The screenshot displays the 'My Frontiers' dashboard. The top navigation bar includes 'OVERVIEW', 'MY INBOX (438)', 'MY SUBMISSIONS', 'MY EDITING ASSIGNMENTS', 'MY REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS', and 'MY EDITOR ROLE'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Specialty:** Marine Fisheries, Aquaculture and Living Resources
- Research Topics:** A section titled 'Contribute to the journal's strategic direction through Research Topics. Here is an example of a research topic in your field [Aquatic Physiology and Harmful Algae](#)' with a 'Suggest Research Topic' button.
- Contents:** A section titled 'Initial Assessment by Associate Editor' with a video player and a PDF file named 'AE\_Guidelines.pdf' (617.52 KB).
- Build review editorial board:** A section showing a list of potential reviewers with their status:

Status	Count
All	25
Pending	0
On Board	10
Declined	5
Revoked	10

- Eric Powell (EP):** Rutgers University, Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences and The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Port Norris, NJ, United States. Status: **REVOKED**
- Leonardo Barcellos (LB):** Universidade de Passo Fundo, Passo Fundo, Brazil. Status: **DECLINED**
- Yanbo Wang:** Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou, China. Status: **ACCEPTED**

\*Please note that the video is not available in China. For those editors based in China, please request a .zip file from the editorial office.

## 1.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

The mandate for reviewers is to ensure that experiments and studies were conducted correctly, taking into account appropriate ethical considerations, and that the conclusions are based on a valid, logical interpretation of the results.

Reviewers are obliged to:

- keep all manuscript files and review reports confidential. These should only be shared with the authors and the handling editor of the manuscript in the review forum. Posting of the review report publicly is prohibited.
- refrain from disclosing their identity to the authors and other reviewer(s) until after completing the review process.
- refrain from using inappropriate language and unconstructive behavior. This will not be tolerated and may result in a reviewer being revoked from the assignment and, in more serious cases, from the editorial board.
- ensure a timely review by completing their assignment as soon as possible and by notifying the handling editor and Editorial Office of any expected delays immediately.

Please see additional guidelines for reviewers issued by the Committee on Publication Ethics, that detail further ethical obligations of reviewers, [here](#).

## 1.2 CONTACT YOUR EDITORIAL OFFICE

Should you have questions regarding any of the following, please see the contact guide below to direct your query to the appropriate party:

Potential conflict of interest, review process, technical queries	[journal name]. <a href="mailto:editorial.office@frontiersin.org">editorial.office@frontiersin.org</a> e.g., microbiology.editorial.office@frontiersin.org
Technical/software issues	<a href="mailto:support@frontiersin.org">support@frontiersin.org</a>
Details of your editorial role	[journal name]. <a href="mailto:@frontiersin.org">@frontiersin.org</a> e.g., microbiology@frontiersin.org

## 2 OUR UNIQUE PEER REVIEW

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The Frontiers collaborative review process has been designed to validate high-quality scholarly contributions by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Associate editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles.

The review process is composed of seven stages: Initial Validation, Editorial Assignment, Independent Review, Interactive Review, Review Finalized, Final Validation and Final Decision. Review editors join the process at the stage of the Independent Review and follow discussions with authors through Interactive Review until they are ready to make their final decision.

### 2.1 INITIAL VALIDATION

To support you in ensuring the quality of the manuscripts, all submissions, including submissions to your Research Topic undergo standard initial quality checks by the Research Integrity team. All submissions are pre-screened for:

- Textual overlap with and similarity to published material
- Potential image or data manipulation
- Language quality
- Adherence to editorial policies
- Adherence to ethical standards
- Potential conflicts of interest

If issues are identified in manuscripts you are handling, the Research Integrity team will notify you and the authors as part of our standard procedure. No action is required from you unless specifically requested.

For more information on the Frontiers Research Integrity policies and the activities of our Research Integrity team visit <https://www.frontiersin.org/about/author-guidelines> and watch our webinar on [YouTube](#) or [Bilibili](#).

## 2.2 ASSOCIATE EDITOR ASSIGNMENT

Following completion of these initial checks, appropriate associate editors or topic editors are invited to handle the manuscript.

Once an associate editor has accepted to handle the review process of a manuscript, it is subjected to an initial assessment - an editor may either decide to send the manuscript out for review or recommend it for immediate rejection to the specialty chief editor. Manuscripts may only be rejected without peer-review for the following reasons:

- An objective error (i.e. an error that is generally recognized by the community)
- Language errors that render the research incomprehensible
- Substantially below standard research quality
- Lack of appropriate ethical considerations and/or non-compliance with ethical standards

Should the manuscript be suitable for review, the handling editor will be asked to secure reviewers (minimum of 2 for the full-length article types, but they may of course assign more), either selected from the editorial board or invited externally among experts in the field.

If reviewers have not been assigned within 7 days, invitations will be sent to the most relevant review editors from the editorial board.

## 2.3 REVIEW EDITOR ASSIGNMENT

The following sections will explain step by step how to proceed in the next stages of the peer-review process once you get invited to review a manuscript.

### 2.3.1 Declare conflicts of interest

When accepting a review invitation, you will be requested to fill out the acceptance questionnaire to confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest (COI) which may prevent you from completing your review assignment.

If you have nothing to declare, you will be able to accept the assignment and gain access to the manuscript straight away. Should you need to declare a relationship with the handling editor or any of the authors your ability to accept the assignment yourself will be disabled and you will be asked to contact the Editorial Office to elaborate on your relationship. If the relationship is deemed permissible the Editorial Office will be able to assign you directly as reviewer for the manuscript.

**NOTE:** Review editors should not accept assignments if they have a close professional relationship with the handling editor, which in their view could affect the objectivity of the review.

Actual or potential conflicts of interest must be reported both to the journal's Editorial Office and to the handling editor of the manuscript. Further details on the information that needs to be disclosed can be seen in the table below. In case of doubt, please contact the Frontiers Editorial Office.

<b>FAMILY</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are any of the authors a spouse or significant other, a member of the same family or a very close personal friend? Review editors should also not be a member of the same family as the handling editor.</li> </ol>
<b>COLLABORATIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Are you currently hosting or have hosted a Frontiers Research Topic with any of the authors within the past 2 years? Are you currently hosting a Frontiers Research Topic with the editor?</li> <li>3. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated on a research project or a publication with any of the authors within the past 2 years?</li> <li>4. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as an advisor or in any other direct supervisory capacity in the past five years?</li> <li>5. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as a student or in any other direct subordinate capacity in the past five years?</li> </ol>
<b>AFFILIATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Are you affiliated with the same institution as the editor? Are you affiliated with the same institution as any of the authors? If so, has this resulted in interactions, collaborations, or mutual interests with the authors that would compromise your impartiality in conducting this review?</li> <li>7. Are you a current member of a committee or department that coincides with an affiliation with the editor or any of the authors?</li> </ol>

## FINANCIAL

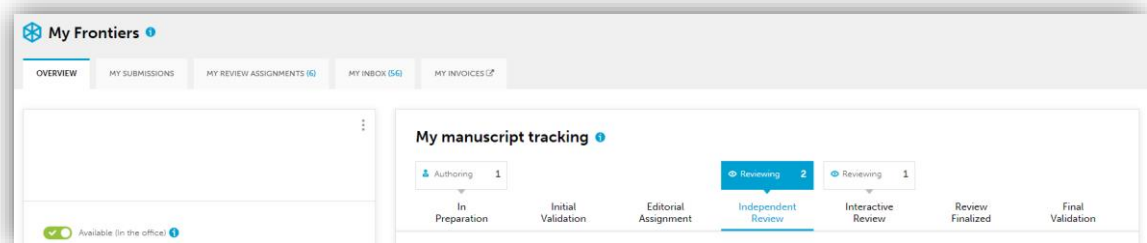
8. Do you have a business or professional partnership with any author?
9. Do you have financial interests or business relations with any organization involved in this research or in the preparation of the manuscript?
10. Do you have any financial interest in the content of the manuscript that might affect your ability to perform an objective review?

## 2.4 INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Upon assignment you will get access to the Review Forum to download the manuscript and all related files as well as to provide your online review report structured into a questionnaire, which varies based on the article type. You are requested to complete this task as soon as possible, and **no later than 7 days after accepting the assignment**. Your constructive comments will provide authors with valuable feedback in order to improve their manuscript.

Should you be unable to complete your assignment within the 7 days, a deadline extension can be granted. Please see section 3.1 for more information.

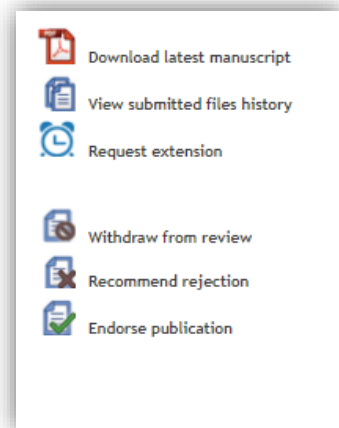
**NOTE:** Your review assignments and pending tasks are displayed in the MyFrontiers dashboard accessible from the top navigation bar once you log in.





The image shows the review forum. On the right-hand side, you will find options to:

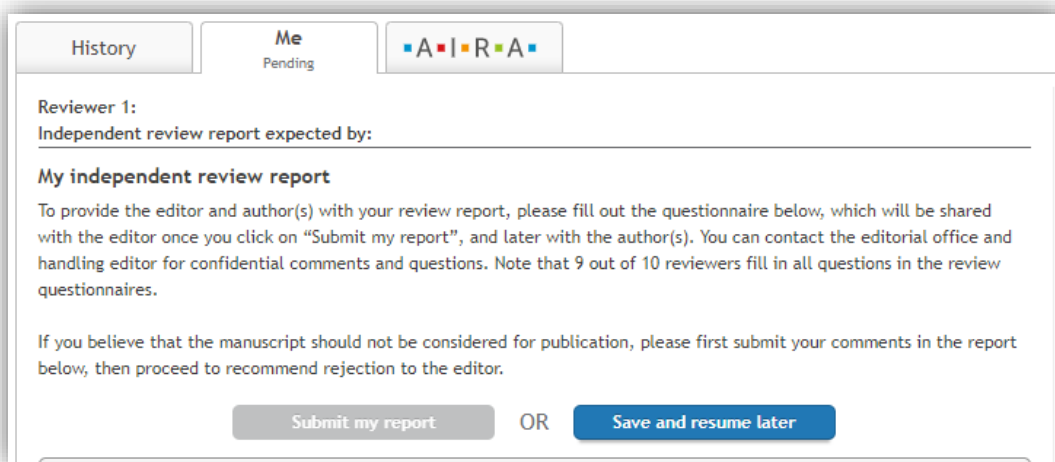
1. Download the latest version of the manuscript
2. Access all related files
3. Withdraw from the process, should you not have time to continue the review or should there be a conflict of interest
4. Recommend rejection to the handling editor should you find any objective errors in the manuscript



To submit your independent review report, visit the review forum and fill out the relevant sections (see screenshot below). The independent review report questionnaire is comprised of a number of questions and a checklist specifically designed for each article type as well as a section to assess the quality of the manuscript.

You may select the “Save and Resume Later” option at any stage, should you still be drafting. Once the review report is ready, simply press “Submit My Report” at the top, so that your comments may be sent to the associate editor. If needed, you can still make changes to your report after it has been submitted, up until the Interactive Review Forum is activated by the associate editor.

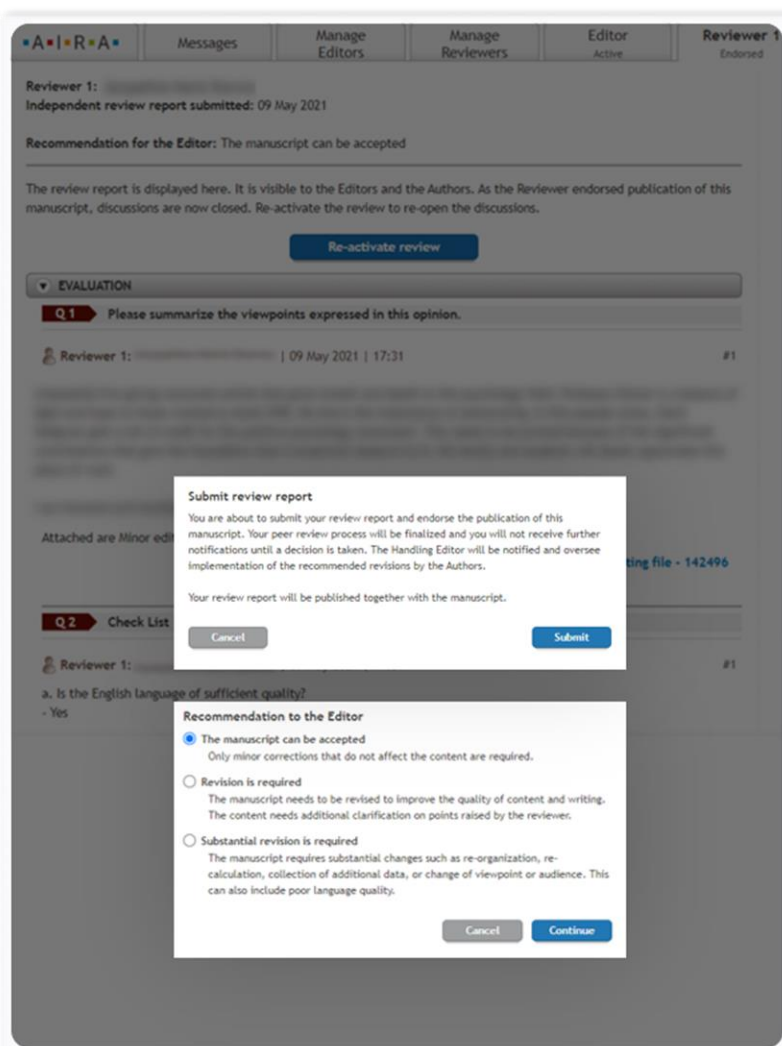
During review, you will also have the option to submit PDF files to complement your review. One file per question can be submitted. Please note that these files are not meant to replace the review report, but can of great use should you wish to comment on a figure or highlight specific sections of the manuscript.

A screenshot of a web interface for submitting a review report. At the top, there are three tabs: 'History', 'Me' (with 'Pending' below it), and 'A|R|A'. Below the tabs, the text reads 'Reviewer 1: Independent review report expected by:'. A horizontal line follows. Below that is the heading 'My independent review report'. The main text says: 'To provide the editor and author(s) with your review report, please fill out the questionnaire below, which will be shared with the editor once you click on “Submit my report”, and later with the author(s). You can contact the editorial office and handling editor for confidential comments and questions. Note that 9 out of 10 reviewers fill in all questions in the review questionnaires.' Below this is another instruction: 'If you believe that the manuscript should not be considered for publication, please first submit your comments in the report below, then proceed to recommend rejection to the editor.' At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Submit my report' and 'Save and resume later', separated by the word 'OR'.

Once you have completed the report, you will be able to provide a recommendation to the editor:

- Minor revisions - Manuscript can be accepted
- Revision is required
- Substantial revision is required

Should you recommend that the manuscript can be accepted, you will have the option to directly endorse the manuscript and finalize your review report. You can read more on what endorsing means in the section *Endorsing for publication (2.7)*.



The screenshot displays the Frontiers review interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Messages, Manage Editors, Manage Reviewers, Editor (Active), and Reviewer (Endorsed). The main content area shows a review report for Reviewer 1, submitted on 09 May 2021. The recommendation for the editor is "The manuscript can be accepted". Below this, there is an "EVALUATION" section with a question "Q 1 Please summarize the viewpoints expressed in this opinion." and a "Check List" section with a question "Q 2 Check List".

Two dialog boxes are overlaid on the interface:

- Submit review report:** This dialog box informs the reviewer that they are about to submit their review report and endorse the publication of the manuscript. It states that the peer review process will be finalized and that the reviewer will not receive further notifications until a decision is taken. It also mentions that the Handling Editor will be notified and oversee the implementation of the recommended revisions by the Authors. The reviewer's report will be published together with the manuscript. There are "Cancel" and "Submit" buttons.
- Recommendation to the Editor:** This dialog box allows the reviewer to select a recommendation to the editor. The options are:
  - The manuscript can be accepted: Only minor corrections that do not affect the content are required.
  - Revision is required: The manuscript needs to be revised to improve the quality of content and writing. The content needs additional clarification on points raised by the reviewer.
  - Substantial revision is required: The manuscript requires substantial changes such as re-organization, re-calculation, collection of additional data, or change of viewpoint or audience. This can also include poor language quality.There are "Cancel" and "Continue" buttons.

Should the handling editor want the authors to directly respond to you in the Review Forum, they are still able to reactivate your review, where your report will become active. You will then need to re-confirm your endorsement following the author's response.

Once all reviewers have submitted their reports, the associate editor will be automatically notified to activate the next phase of the review, the interactive review, which will provide authors and reviewers access to all review reports and any comments posted in the Editor tab. The handling editor can choose to activate the review indicating minor, moderate or substantial revisions. The revision level is reflected in the amount of days the authors are given to prepare their responses and revision (7, 14 or 21 days).

Alternatively, the handling editor can recommend rejection based on your or other reviewer(s)' comments by activating the interactive review with major concerns. This provides the authors with 7 days to prepare a rebuttal. Should the handling editor choose this route, you will be revoked from the assignment. In case your expertise is needed, the handling editor may contact you following the authors' rebuttal.

## 2.5 INTERACTIVE REVIEW

Once the interactive review forum is activated, authors are automatically notified to enter the review forum, where they can access the submitted reports, and have up to 30 days to address them and/or resubmit a revised manuscript, if necessary.

Once the authors have responded, you will be automatically notified and will be asked to visit the review forum within 7 days. You will be able to interact with the authors, other reviewer(s) and the Associate Editor through comments in the discussion forum. At this stage all reviewers' reports and comments posted by Associate Editor in the Editor tab will be visible to the authors and to the other review editor(s), enabling further discussion and clarification.

The handling Associate Editor monitors the process to ensure the timeliness of the review and the constructiveness of the comments. Author unresponsiveness or disputes over manuscript content should be reported to both the Editorial Office (for more information on relevant contact details, please see Section 1.2) and the handling Associate Editor.

Should a dispute arise, the Associate Editor will act as a mediator, working with all parties involved to resolve the issue. The review is complete once all issues/comments are addressed to the reviewers' satisfaction.

You can contact the Associate Editor directly through the review forum by selecting the blue envelope sign next to their name (see screenshot below).

## 2.6 MAKING A RECOMMENDATION

When you are ready to make your final decision, please consider the following points:

- Has the final manuscript been submitted?
- Does the manuscript propose a suitable research question and hypothesis, supported by relevant theory?
- Do the authors apply a correct and transparent methodology?
- Is the study design and materials clearly laid out?
- Is the language and presentation clear and adequate?
- Are figures and tables in line with scientific norms and standards?
- Do the authors follow Frontiers [author guidelines](#) on editorial and ethical policies?
- Is the manuscript grounded in existing literature through sufficient referencing and does it offer an appropriate coverage of the relevant literature?

**Ready to make your decision, here are your options**

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<p>Ready for publication: <b>Endorse</b> the manuscript</p>	<p>No longer wish to/able to take part in the review: <b>Withdraw</b> from review</p>	<p>Authors are unable/unwilling to address your concerns: <b>Recommend rejection</b></p>
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### 2.6.1 Endorsing for publication

Should you endorse the manuscript for publication, you confirm that your comments have been adequately addressed by the authors. If manuscript is not yet in a publishable form, please do not endorse the manuscript.

You will be able to provide the authors with any final comments you may have. Please note that your final comments should not contain any issues that have yet to be addressed by the authors.

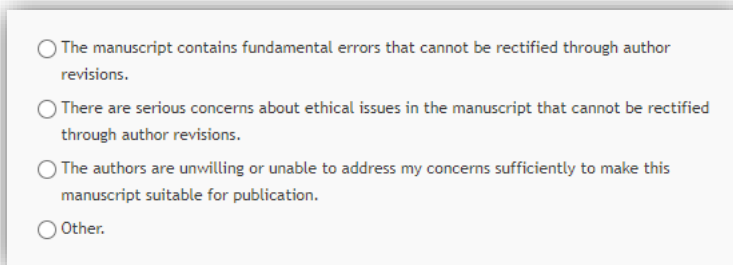
When finalizing your review, you will also be asked to confirm that you agree to your name and affiliation being disclosed on the article, if published.

The handling editor will be notified of your endorsement and is able to accept the manuscript at the end of the process, if appropriate.

## 2.6.2 Withdrawing and/or recommending rejection

Should you recommend rejection of a manuscript, you will remain anonymous, and your recommendation will be sent to the handling editor, who will be able to forward this recommendation to the Specialty Chief Editor. Should the handling editor choose to continue review following your withdrawal and/or recommendation other reviewers may be assigned, and your report remain available in the forum.

When withdrawing/recommending rejection, you will be asked to select the reason for your decision from a list (see screenshots below). While this is not mandatory, you are also encouraged to provide the handling editor with further comments. The reasons given will be visible to the associate editor, chief editors, and Editorial Office, but will not be available to the authors.



The manuscript contains fundamental errors that cannot be rectified through author revisions.

There are serious concerns about ethical issues in the manuscript that cannot be rectified through author revisions.

The authors are unwilling or unable to address my concerns sufficiently to make this manuscript suitable for publication.

Other.

## 2.7 FINAL DECISION AND VALIDATION

Once all reviewers completed their activity in the review forum, the handling editor will be asked to make their final decision. Accepted manuscripts undergo a final quality check by the Editorial Office. Once approved, the abstract will be published online immediately, and the full manuscript will move on to typesetting.

You will be informed once the handling editor has made their final decision.

## 3 FAQ

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### 3.1 EXTENSION REQUEST

While the Frontiers platform has been designed to ensure a thorough yet rapid review process, to enable a true discussion between authors and reviewers, you may request extensions at any stage, should you need more time to complete a review.

- During the review, extensions may be self-granted once during the independent review and once during the interactive review. This is done by selecting the corresponding option in the right-hand side menu of the review forum once it becomes available. If any additional extensions are needed, please contact the Editorial Office.



- Short extensions can also be requested by sending an email to the Editorial Office, who will be able to update the system accordingly.
- Additional or longer extensions may be requested by contacting the Editorial Office, keeping in mind that requests for long extensions will have to be confirmed by the handling editor as well.

### 3.2 WRONG REVISION LEVEL SUGGESTED/PREMATURE ENDORSEMENT

Upon submitting your report, you will be asked to indicate the suggested revision level. Should you select the wrong option by mistake, please contact your editorial office as soon as possible.

### 3.3 SETTING YOURSELF OUT OF OFFICE

If you are going to be unavailable for a short time, you can set yourself out of office in My Frontiers for up to 28 consecutive days. For the time that you are unavailable, you will not receive any new automatic Invitations to review. However, associate editors will still be able to personally invite you to review.

Notifications regarding any ongoing assignments or pending invitations will remain.

Should you be unavailable for longer than 28 days please contact your journal team for guidance.

