

## **Reviewer Guidelines (adapted from ISMIR review guidelines)**

### **Scheduling**

As soon as you are notified of your assigned paper, please check all the following points:

- there is no obvious conflict of interest (see CoI section below)
- the deadline allows you enough time to complete your review
- you are qualified to review the paper assigned
- the paper assigned to you violates any of the paper submission guidelines (<https://transactions.ismir.net/about/submissions>)

Please notify the Editors immediately if any issues arise regarding these points. Adhering to the review deadline is essential. It is advisable to read the papers well in advance before the deadline in order to have time to think about them over a sufficiently long timespan before writing your reviews. This is essential in order for you to make thoughtful decisions about your assigned paper, and to provide helpful suggestions for the authors.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Reviewers will be asked to comment on all of the criteria below:

#### **Research papers**

- Originality
- Previous work
- Methodology
- Clarity
- Reproducibility
- Ethical approval
- Overall value

#### **Overview papers**

- Originality
- Previous work
- Clarity
- Overall value

For **Dataset** papers, the reviewers are asked to comment on:

- Relevance
- Methods used for data collection and preprocessing
- Quality of dataset and description, including potential and suitability for reuse
- Overall value
- Ethical approval

Keep in mind that minor flaws can be corrected, and should not be a reason to reject a paper. However, accepted papers must be technically sound, have a proper English style, and make an original and substantial contribution to the MIR research field, and contain the amount of contributions you may expect from a journal paper. Also, please familiarize yourself with the information in the [Call for paper](#) regarding the topics of the journal.

Ensure that your scores are consistent with your comments to the authors. In particular, receiving good comments and a poor score is frustrating, and often causes the authors to request clarifications.

Comments are probably the most important part of the reviews. They will be returned to the authors, so you should include any specific feedback which can help improve the papers. Thorough reviewers' comments also help the Editor decide on its acceptance. Remember that your reviews are evaluated by the Editors. Therefore your good work will help generating a positive trend in the research

community. Short reviews are not helpful to both the authors and the Editors. Please be as specific and detailed as you can. When discussing related work and references, simply saying “this is well known” or “this has been common practice for years” is not appropriate. You should cite publications, or other public disclosures of techniques, which can support your statements. Be specific also when you suggest improvements in the writing. If there is a particular passage in the text that is unclear, point it out and give suggestions for improvements. On the other hand, if the whole paper is poorly written, you are not expected to rewrite it for the authors.

Be generous about providing new ideas for improvement. You may suggest different techniques or tools to be used in the applications presented in a paper. You may also suggest the authors a new application area that might benefit from their work. You may suggest them a generalization of their concept, which they have not considered. If you think that the paper has merits but does not exactly match the topics of the journal, please do not simply reject the paper but communicate this to the Editors.

The reviewers and editors will choose between one of these options:

1. **Accept submission:** accept the manuscript as it is submitted (send it to production team).
2. **Revisions required:** this option requires minor editions, so it implies a conditional acceptance. The editor can then decide if the reviewed manuscript need to go back to reviewers. If the editor is able to check that all of the reviewers' comments have been addressed, then she/he can accept or ask for further revisions; if the editor would like the reviewers to check, she/he can send it back to one or more reviewers (e.g. there is not much point in sending a paper back to someone who had no problem with the previous version, or who only pointed out a few typos - you can check that yourself)
3. **Resubmit for review.** This option does not reflect a conditional submission but a rejection and the chance to resubmit an updated version. This should be the option in case of doubt on acceptance, and it implies another round of review, preferably from the same 3 reviewers unless the editor decides that one of the reviewers needs to be replaced. We advise that this option should only be used once; so if a revised paper is still rated (in your judgement) as “resubmit for review”, it should normally be rejected.
4. **Decline submission:** reject the paper.

## ETHICAL GUIDELINES

### Commitment and Respect

Remember that academic careers and reputations rely on scientific publications. Therefore you have to be seriously committed to your work as a reviewer. A sketchy or casual review is a lack of respect to the authors who have seriously submitted their paper, and in the long run damages the journal. If you have agreed to review a paper, you should devote enough time to write a thoughtful and detailed review. If you think you cannot review properly your assigned paper because you are too busy, you should not commit to your assignment. However, please do communicate this to the Editor as soon as possible so that the paper can be reassigned in time. Acting that way you are helping much more than doing a superficial review.

Keep in mind that belittling or sarcastic comments are not appropriate. Even if you think that a paper is really bad, you should be constructive and still provide feedback to the authors. If you give a paper a low score, it is essential that you justify the reason for that score in detail. Just saying “I do not like this approach because I am a guru in this area” is not constructive. Also keep in mind that directly talking about the authors can be sometimes perceived as being confrontational, even though you do not mean it this way. For this reason, you may want to avoid referring to the authors by using the phrase “you” or “the authors”, and use instead “the paper”.

### Confidentiality and Anonymity

As a reviewer you have the responsibility to protect the confidentiality of the ideas represented in the papers you review. Submissions to the TISMIR have not (or should not have) been published before,

although there might be extensions of ISMIR papers. In that case, extended papers are expected to incorporate around half (or more) of new material.

Although the authors' ultimate goal is to publish and disseminate their work, if a paper is not accepted at TISMIR, it will most likely be submitted to some other journal or conference. Sometimes a submitted paper is still considered confidential by the author's employers or funding sources. In order to comply with confidentiality requirements:

- you should not show your assigned papers (or their accompanying material) to anyone else, including colleagues or students, unless you have asked them to help with your review.
- you should not use ideas from your assigned papers to develop new ones until the paper has been made public
- after completing your reviews you should keep all copies of your assigned papers and accompanying material strictly confidential; also you should not use implementations you may have written and results you may have obtained to evaluate the ideas in the papers until they have been published and are properly citable.

Although some reviewers like to disclose their identity to authors, it is advisable not to do so. One of the most common ways of inadvertently disclosing your identity is asking the authors to cite your past work and several of your own papers. This should be avoided. Besides, this attitude may have a negative effect on your review: it may be seen as if you just want to gain more citations, and may ultimately result in the authors just ignoring your review (and possibly the Editors too).

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Even though you would judge impartially any paper assigned to you, there has to be no doubt about the impartiality of your reviews. Therefore, if there is a potential conflict of interest with one of your assigned papers, you should inform the Editor. Although in general you should use your judgment, examples of situations of potential conflicts of interest are the following:

- you work in the same research group as one of the authors;
- you have been involved in the work and will be credited in some way (e.g. you have hosted one of the authors in your lab, to carry out work related to the paper);
- you have formally collaborated (e.g., written a paper together, or been awarded a joint grant) with one of the authors in the past three years (more or less);
- you were the M.Sc./Ph.D. advisor (or advisee) of one of the authors: this is often considered to be a lifetime conflict of interest;
- you have reasons to believe that others might see a conflict of interest, even though there is none (e.g., you and one of the authors work for the same multinational corporation, although you work in different departments on different continents and have never met before).

In case you have any doubt about a potential conflict of interest, then rather decide that there is such a conflict and contact the Editor.