

Find the decision behind a fast rejection.

A source-traced workbook for separating scope, contribution, evidence, reporting, integrity, and package decisions before the next submission.

6

distinct screen decisions

4

first-party sources

0

invented rate estimates

Core boundary. This is a qualitative source synthesis, not a measured distribution of rejection reasons, scientific-validity review, compliance determination, or acceptance prediction.

Use before submission

Compare the manuscript to the exact journal model and record the evidence still missing.

Use after rejection

Classify the decision before revising, retargeting, or rebuilding the package.

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Six questions before peer review.

01 Scope and article type

Question: Does this manuscript belong in this journal, in a type the journal accepts?

Inspect: The exact aims and scope, accepted article type, and several recent articles that address a comparable audience.

Action: Retarget when the audience or article type is structurally wrong. Reframing cannot repair an ineligible submission type.

Sources A, B, C

02 Contribution standard

Question: Does the paper meet this journal's stated model for contribution, relevance, or interest?

Inspect: The journal's own editorial criteria and the manuscript's one-sentence contribution, compared without impact-factor shorthand.

Action: Retarget if the work cannot honestly meet the venue's contribution model. Revise only when the contribution is real but obscured.

Sources A, B, D

03 Claims and evidence

Question: Do the title, abstract, and conclusions stay inside what the design and results support?

Inspect: A claim-to-result trace for every headline statement, with limitations and alternative explanations visible.

Action: Recalibrate the claims or strengthen the analysis. Do not use the cover letter to promise evidence that is absent from the manuscript.

Sources A, C

04 Methods and reporting

Question: Is there enough detail and appropriate reporting for editors and reviewers to evaluate the work?

Inspect: The applicable reporting guideline, reproducible methods, analysis details, and a clear account of study limitations.

Action: Complete missing reporting and analysis detail before submission. Escalate unresolved methodological concerns to a qualified expert.

Sources A, C

05 Ethics, integrity, and transparency

Question: Are required approvals, disclosures, registrations, data statements, and integrity conditions addressed?

Inspect: Project-specific approvals and records, plus the current journal policy for the exact study and article type.

Action: Stop and resolve any missing approval or integrity issue. Administrative polish is not a substitute for authorization.

Sources A, B, C

06 Submission package

Question: Can the journal identify, evaluate, and process the submission without avoidable ambiguity or missing material?

Inspect: The current author instructions, required files and statements, accurate metadata, readable figures, and complete coauthor sign-off.

Action: Complete the package and verify it in the live submission system. Treat a returned submission differently from a substantive rejection.

Sources B, C

Do not flatten journal models. A validity-focused journal and a selective contribution-focused journal can screen the same manuscript differently. The live journal criteria control.

WORKING RECORD

Document the decision, not the anxiety.

JOURNAL, ARTICLE TYPE, AND DATE CHECKED

THE JOURNAL'S EXACT EDITORIAL MODEL, WITH OFFICIAL URL

THE MANUSCRIPT'S ONE-SENTENCE CONTRIBUTION

THE FIRST SCREEN THAT REMAINS UNRESOLVED AND THE EVIDENCE

WHAT THE SOURCE STATES VERSUS WHAT THE TEAM INFERS

DECISION OWNER, NEXT ACTION, AND RECHECK DATE

Response route

Scope, type, or contribution mismatch	Retarget	Choose a venue whose published model matches the work as it exists.
Claims exceed the evidence	Recalibrate	Align title, abstract, conclusions, and cover letter with the supported claim set.
Methods or reporting are incomplete	Revise	Close the evaluability gap and obtain the needed expert review before resubmission.
Policy, ethics, or integrity issue	Resolve	Pause submission and obtain the required project-specific determination or record.
Files, metadata, or declarations missing	Complete	Repair the package and verify every item against the live journal instructions.

A completed example and evidence record.

This scenario is fictional. It demonstrates the record and does not describe a real manuscript or editorial decision.

A well-powered observational study is submitted to a selective translational journal. The abstract implies clinical utility, but the design establishes association. The journal also prioritizes work with an intervention-ready consequence.

VISIBLE EVIDENCE	The journal's editorial criteria require a contribution model the paper does not currently satisfy. The abstract also overstates what the design establishes.
DO NOT INFER	Do not conclude that the study is invalid, that another journal will accept it, or that one wording change will clear the current journal's bar.
NEXT DECISION	Recalibrate the claims, then compare journals whose scope and contribution model fit a rigorous observational result.

Method

Included	Excluded
Public first-party guidance that describes an initial editorial check, manuscript preparation standard, or journal-specific contribution model.	Undocumented rejection-rate estimates, anonymous anecdotes, commercial acceptance predictions, and generalized rules presented as universal.

Official sources

- A. PLOS. Initial evaluation of manuscripts. <https://explore.plos.org/editor-resources/manuscript-evaluation>
- B. PLOS ONE. Editorial and Peer Review Process. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/editorial-and-peer-review-process>
- C. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Preparing a Manuscript for Submission to a Medical Journal. <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/manuscript-preparation/preparing-for-submission.html>
- D. Nature Methods. What makes a Nature Methods paper. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41592-022-01558-4>

Canonical record: <https://manusights.com/resources/desk-rejection-report>. Recheck the live journal instructions immediately before upload. The Manusights synthesis and blank workbook are CC BY 4.0; third-party source material retains its original terms.