

OPERATIONAL SIGNAL / NOT AN OUTCOME PREDICTION

Decode the status. Do not invent the outcome.

Capture the exact label, recover the named publisher's definition, state the minimum conclusion, and choose one next action you control.

Reviewers advise. Editors decide.

Reviewers advise. Editors decide. A journal may decline external review, may reach a decision that differs from reviewer recommendations, and may consider suitability as well as technical quality.

Journal and manuscript identifier

Keep the journal title and local manuscript ID together.

Exact status and date observed

Copy the label exactly. Do not normalize it.

2. Publisher definition

Link the named journal or publisher page that defines the label. If none is public, mark the meaning unknown.

3. Minimum conclusion

Write only what the definition establishes about intake, assignment, recruitment, review, decision, or production.

4. Excluded inference

List the tempting conclusions the status does not support, including likely outcome, reviewer sentiment, or a promised date.

5. Next controlled action

Name one action, owner, and trigger: wait, answer a request, prepare a revision ledger, or inquire under the journal's policy.

AUTHOR-SIDE NAVIGATION FRAME

Separate the fact from the inference.

These stages are not a universal publisher taxonomy. Use the named journal's current definition whenever it exists.

1	Intake and technical checks ESTABLISHES The journal received the submission and is checking administrative, formatting, disclosure, policy, or technical requirements.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH It does not show that an editor has judged the manuscript suitable or that external reviewers have been invited.	NEXT ACTION Keep the submitted files and confirmation together. Respond only to concrete journal requests and preserve every corrected version.
2	Editor assignment and suitability ESTABLISHES The journal is identifying or has assigned an editor who can assess scope, policy, and editorial suitability.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH It does not show that external review will occur or that the editor has reached a favorable scientific judgment.	NEXT ACTION Check the journal's stated editorial process. Do not interpret a quiet status change as an informal decision.
3	Reviewer recruitment ESTABLISHES The editor or journal office is seeking external experts under the journal's own process.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH An invitation is not an accepted assignment, and an accepted assignment is not a completed report.	NEXT ACTION Use the journal's published status guidance and contact threshold. Reviewer recruitment can require multiple invitations.
4	External review phase ESTABLISHES Only what the named journal says its status means. The same phrase can represent different operational states at different publishers.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH It does not reveal the likely decision, the number or direction of reports, or whether every invited reviewer has accepted.	NEXT ACTION Record the exact label, date observed, journal definition, and source URL. Avoid translating it into an outcome.
5	Reviews returned and editor deliberation ESTABLISHES At least some review work or a draft editorial decision exists, as defined by the journal's status documentation.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH Completed reports are not a final decision. Reviewers advise; the editor remains responsible for the decision.	NEXT ACTION Wait for the formal decision letter. Prepare the team to classify requests, evidence needs, and author responsibilities only after it arrives.
6	Revision and reconsideration ESTABLISHES The editor has invited a new version under stated conditions and a deadline or resubmission route.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH A revision invitation is not an acceptance. The editor may decide directly or seek additional external review.	NEXT ACTION Build a point-by-point response ledger, preserve line references, and distinguish completed changes from reasoned disagreements.
7	Acceptance and production ESTABLISHES Only the acceptance level named in the journal's formal communication. Some publishers distinguish editorial or provisional acceptance from formal acceptance.	DOES NOT ESTABLISH A favorable status label does not remove final technical, integrity, licensing, authorship, or production checks.	NEXT ACTION Retain the formal letter, identify the version of record workflow, complete required checks, and avoid announcing acceptance from an ambiguous dashboard label.

Stop rule. If the publisher does not define the label, mark its meaning unknown. Do not borrow a definition from another publisher.

NISO-ALIGNED DESCRIPTIVE RECORD

A review model is more than anonymity.

The prompts below paraphrase the four elements identified by the NISO terminology project. They do not reproduce the formal standard.

01

Identity transparency

Which identities are visible to authors, reviewers, and editors at each stage?

Record the journal's exact policy rather than relying on labels such as single, double, or open review by themselves.

02

Reviewer interaction

Can reviewers interact with editors, other reviewers, or authors?

Record each permitted interaction route and whether it occurs before or after an initial report.

03

Published review information

Which parts of the review record can appear with the article?

Check separately for reports, decision letters, author responses, manuscript versions, summaries, and names.

04

Post-publication commenting

Can readers comment after publication, and who may participate?

Record whether commenting is open, invited, moderated, or unavailable, and where the policy is stated.

First-party labels cannot be interchanged

Publisher	Exact status	Source-backed meaning
PLOS ONE Checked September 22, 2026	Under review	The handling editor has invited peer reviewers. The public definition does not say that every invited reviewer has accepted.
BMJ Author Hub Checked September 22, 2026	Peer Review in Progress	The article has secured the minimum number of required reviewers under the described BMJ workflow.
PLOS ONE Checked September 22, 2026	Required reviews complete	Some or all assigned reviewers have submitted comments. This is not the final editorial decision.
BMJ Author Hub Checked September 22, 2026	Awaiting Editor Decision	The minimum number of reviews needed for a decision has been received; the editor will decide whether to accept, reject, or revise.
PLOS ONE Checked September 22, 2026	Editorial accept decision	PLOS ONE describes this as provisional acceptance pending final formatting and technical checks before a formal accept decision.
BMJ Author Hub Checked September 22, 2026	In Production	The article has been accepted in the workflow described on the BMJ Author Hub and moves into final quality checks and production.

Formal terminology: [ANSI/NISO Z39.106-2023](#) and [STM and NISO overview](#).

EVIDENCE CHECKED SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Keep the source beside the status.

The web guide, PDF, and source record share one edition. Recheck publisher examples after a process-page change and no later than 90 days after this review.

A. ANSI/NISO Z39.106-2023, Standard Terminology for Peer Review

NISO / Abstract; publication metadata; DOI 10.3789/ansi.niso.z39.106-2023

The purpose and publication identity of the formal peer-review terminology standard.

[Open source](#)

C. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals

ICMJE / Updated January 2026; section II.C.2.c, Peer Review, pages 4-5

Peer review's editorial role, editor decision ownership, variation among journal models, and the need for journals to describe their processes clearly.

[Open source](#)

E. The peer review process

BMJ Author Hub / Types of peer review; Peer review process; Timeframes

Publisher-specific status meanings, reviewer recruitment, decision ownership, and the instruction to use each journal's own timing information.

[Open source](#)

B. Peer Review Terminology

STM and NISO / A Standard Terminology for Peer Review

The standard's external-journal-review scope and its four descriptive elements: identity transparency, reviewer interaction, published review information, and post-publication commenting.

[Open source](#)

D. Editorial and Peer Review Process

PLOS ONE / Understanding Manuscript Statuses; Editorial Decisions; Revisions; Accepted Manuscripts

Publisher-specific status meanings, decision routes, reconsideration, and the distinction between editorial and formal acceptance.

[Open source](#)

Teaching prompts

1. Which words in the status are observations and which are assumptions?

2. What does the publisher say has happened at this stage?

3. Which outcome or timing inference must be excluded?

4. What action remains under the author's control?

Reuse. Original Manusights record structure and worksheet: CC BY 4.0. Credit Manusights, title, edition, and <https://manusights.com/resources/peer-review-explained>; identify changes. NISO terminology and all third-party materials retain their own status. An author-side record for interpreting journal submission statuses and documenting a journal's peer-review model. It does not predict a decision, estimate a timeline, or replace the named journal's current instructions.