

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you want to know how your manuscript will be evaluated? If so, best to learn about how the *AJS* works. It's [here](#).

So you got an invitation to revise and resubmit! You might have these questions:

- 1) **FAQ1: How long do I have for my R&R?** If you received an invitation to revise and resubmit, we do not give you a specific deadline (and so we don't need to be constantly giving you extensions, like other journals!). It is the case that after four years, in our system, your R&R will automatically expire, but we don't imagine that many of you are planning on waiting four years to turn it around. What we would say, however, is that the field changes, and your revision will be judged in terms of the impact it will make when it is actually resubmitted—and not in terms of what impact it *would* have made at the time you submitted your first version! Not only may other people have published work that does what you had hoped to do, but techniques and standards may have changed, some open questions may have been resolved, some once-current issues may have become passé. So, all things being equal, the earlier you can submit your manuscript, the better.
- 2) **FAQ2: Who will read my R&R?** Many journals have a policy that they only ask the reviewers who saw the manuscript the first time to read it a second time. The *AJS*, in contrast, always asks one of the first reviewers (usually the one whose critiques were most detailed and substantive of those who thought the manuscript had a chance) and one new reviewer. We do this so that your review process does not turn into hostage negotiation, which it easily can when your task is merely to satisfy some imperious and anonymous reviewer: if making the manuscript worse is what it takes to satisfy Reviewer G, you'll do it. In contrast, at the *AJS*, you will need to worry about whether satisfying Reviewer G by doing something that you know isn't the best thing to do might lead new Reviewer H to judge the paper poorly. So you need to use the reviewers' comments to *improve* the paper, not do what they want. If you disagree with their recommendations, handle this clearly and specifically (though tact is appreciated by most reviewers; obscurity is frowned upon by the editorial board).

So you got a rejection! You might have this question:

- 3) **FAQ3: Under what circumstances does it make sense for me to appeal a decision?** The answer is that you should appeal only if the following two things are true
 - a) A reviewer made a flagrant error of interpretation as to what you had done, *and*
 - b) The editors' letter indicates that this error was consequential for the decision.

Note that (a) excludes differences of judgment of quality (“Reviewer A says it wasn't good enough, but it was!”) and differences of interpretations of the data (“Reviewer A says my

finding is due to selection, and I say it isn't!"). Note that (b) excludes times when the editorial letter passes over an error made by a reviewer in silence.

The following are not justifications for making an appeal:

- 1) You think a reviewer was biased or unfair. The editorial board understands that they have to contextualize different reviewers' positions to assemble a coherent expert judgment of a manuscript.
- 2) You think that the reviewers in general are supportive. Because we can only publish a fraction of the papers that are submitted, we must reject some papers that are good, and that reviewers think are good, to make space for those that reviewers, and we, think are of outstanding importance. Further, reviewers sometimes use gentler and more supportive language in their comments to the author than they do in their comments to the editor.
- 3) A reviewer found a problem in a revised manuscript that is inherent in the design that was seemingly acceptable in the first round of review. We do our best never to reject manuscripts upon review for reasons that should have been raised when the manuscript was first submitted. However, one reason we do add new reviewers in the *R&R* stage is to catch weaknesses that may have been previously missed, and if these are believed to be uncorrectable, a rejection is the only proper decision.

If you are interested in making an appeal, it might help to begin with an inquiry that asks the board whether *if* you were able to disprove some aspect of a review, it would change the board's decision. If not, then you can save the trouble. If so, you can assemble the evidence you think will be convincing and submit your appeal to the *AJS* editorial office, and the editor will go over it and bring it to the board with a recommendation.