

Editorial: Review Changes

In a [recent editorial](#), we discussed the need to enforce the acceptance criteria of *Physical Review Letters* more rigorously, and our intention to engage in an ongoing conversation with the physics community to determine the best way forward.

Recently a committee of senior and early career scientists from all major areas of physics spent two days at the Ridge Editorial Offices for in-depth discussions about the role and evolution of PRL. They provided us with a series of recommendations for all aspects of the journal. Most importantly, they endorsed the main point of our recent editorial. The committee affirmed that the present situation, with continued growth in both submissions and published Letters, is unsustainable. In particular, the committee indicated that the number of PRL submissions that undergo the full review process must decrease.

In the coming weeks we will respond with some important changes in the way papers are submitted and reviewed.

We will ask both authors and referees to address more explicitly than in the past how the paper (i) substantially advances a particular field; or (ii) opens a significant new area of research; or (iii) solves a critical outstanding problem, or makes a significant step toward solving such a problem; or (iv) is of great general interest, based, for example, on scientific aesthetics.

Authors will be required to submit a brief plain-language argument to support why their paper meets the PRL criteria in a new box on the manuscript submission server. Editors and any referees may use this text as an aid in reaching an editorial decision.

As always, [we encourage authors to submit a very short summary](#) of their paper for the nonspecialist reader. In the near future, we will offer a new feature: some of these summaries will be selected for publication along with the associated Letter.

We make an initial evaluation of all papers we receive. Eight years ago we greatly increased the fraction of papers we reject without external anonymous review—papers we judge are not suited for PRL under the presumption that the work is technically valid. The committee has asked us to significantly increase the fraction of such papers. We will accomplish this by soliciting more informal advice, including from our Divisional Associate Editors, though the volume of submissions precludes doing this for all cases. We are confident that a stronger emphasis on this approach will both significantly refocus the unique place of PRL in the APS publication landscape, and also more rapidly clarify for authors the status of their submissions.

Finally, we will soon implement a new option for authors suggested by the committee. There will be a place on the manuscript server for authors to provide us with contact information, for instance, to an institutional press office to which notification can be made if a Letter is accepted for publication.

The committee made additional recommendations about other aspects of PRL, which include issues that range from how Letters are presented and accessed to how we editors may deepen our contact with the community of authors and reviewers. We will discuss and/or announce these as they come about, but for now we aim at the most important first step to make PRL both a better and more sustainable journal.

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Editor

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