How to do a good meta-review of a research paper

Tips and tricks

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for RecSys 2025 SPC Members

Goals for a meta-reviewer

- Assess the paper's quality

- Give constructive and polite feedback to the authors

- Encourage PC members to write good, actionable reviews

- Give the Program Chairs a concise and justified overview of your assessment

Leading principle: "Review for others as you would have others review for you"

McPeek, M. A., D. L. DeAngelis, R. G. Shaw, A. J. Moore, M. D. Rausher, D. R. Strong, A. M. Ellison, L. Barrett, L. Rieseberg, M. D. Breed, J. Sullivan, C. W. Osenberg, M. Holyoak, and M. A. Elgar. 2009. The golden rule of reviewing. American Naturalist 173:E155–E158.

The role of a meta-reviewer

- **Not** to write a simple summary of collected reviews

- **Encourage** PC members to write strong reviews
- **Call out** PC members with subpar reviews
- **Identify** gaps in expertise, adding in additional reviewers
- **Lead** the discussion, focused on formulating a recommendation

- **Write** a balanced meta-review that lists a **summary** of the **contributions**, a **justification** for the **recommendation**, and **actionable feedback** for the authors, whether accepted or not.

Main responsibilities outside of the meta-review

- Double check for **desk rejection** early on

- **Encourage** timely reviews

- **Foster discussion**, acknowledge well-argued reviews, and address weaker reviews.

- Always remain polite and constructive!

- **Make a balanced final decision**, avoid borderlines.

References

- Wiley's Step by step guide to reviewing a manuscript, https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html

- Elsevier's How to conduct a review, https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/how-to-review

- SIGIR '25 meta-reviewing guidelines https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I4eTHDaMQ2-khs5MEv_1BjEcvhsPWAIcZvTFzE124lI/edit?usp=sharing