Welcome and thank you for your support of PLOS Pathogens and the Open Access movement.

Bacteria, fungi, parasites, prions and viruses cause a variety of diseases that have important medical, agricultural, and economic consequences. Moreover, the study of microbes continues to provide novel insights into such fundamental processes as the molecular basis of cellular and organismal function. PLOS Pathogens reflects the full breadth of research in these areas by publishing outstanding original articles that significantly advance the understanding of pathogens and how they interact with their host organisms.

Since its launch in 2005, PLOS Pathogens has grown not only in the number of papers published, but also in recognition as a quality publication and community resource. We have every reason to expect that this trend will continue and our Editorial Board plays an invaluable role in this process.

PLOS Pathogens is one of a suite of influential journals published by PLOS. Information about the other journals, the PLOS business model, PLOS innovations in scientific publishing, and Open Access copyright and licensure can be found in Appendix IX.

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THE PLOS PATHOGENS EDITORIAL BOARD

To ensure the fairest and most objective decision-making, the editorial process at PLOS Pathogens is run as a partnership between the Editor-in-Chiefs, a group of academic experts separated into a team of Section Editors, and a group who act as Associate Editors. These individuals are leaders in their fields and represent the full breadth of pathogen-related research.

In addition, PLOS Pathogens regularly invite Guest Editors to act as Associate Editors on specific manuscripts. Members of our Editorial Board have a regular responsibility to edit papers, while guests are asked to manage the review of papers which suit their particular field of expertise, and play an important role in maintaining the structure and vibrancy of our broad journal.

A full organizational chart can be found in Appendix VI.

Getting Started

- Send us a list of keywords highlighting your areas of expertise.
- Log into the journal’s Editorial Manager manuscript submission system.
- Create a personal profile, including all contact details, classifications of scientific disciplines and keywords.
- Review all information in this Handbook and the PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board Knowledge Base.
- Contact the PLOS Pathogens Team with any questions.

Going Away and/or Unavailable

In advance of an absence, Associate Editors should email the PLOS Pathogens Team with the following information:

- Unavailability dates;
- Confirmation on whether they will be able to continue handling your existing assignments.
MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

Associate Editors oversee the peer review process for the journal, including evaluating submissions, selecting reviewers and assessing their comments, and making editorial decisions. This section provides a high-level overview of the steps of this process. Appendix II describes how to complete specific tasks during this process in Editorial Manager, the journal’s manuscript management system.

Invitations

• Associate Editors aim to respond to the initial invitation to handle a manuscript within 24 hours.

Independent Evaluation

• Within three days of accepting the invitation, Associate Editors make an initial decision as to whether the manuscript is suitable for further consideration.
• The Associate Editor is not required to send the paper out for review. If a paper is worthy for review, Associate Editors are expected to invite reviewers upon accepting an assignment, or no later than three days after.

External Peer Review

• Associate Editors manage the peer review process, soliciting and monitoring reviews.
• All reviews should be received within two - four weeks of the editor agreeing to handle a submission.

Decision

• Associate Editors aim to submit their decision and accompanying decision letter for Section Editor approval within five days from receipt of the last review.

INVITATIONS

Each Research Article is assigned by the PLOS Pathogens Team to a Section Editor, who then invites an Associate Editor based on their area of expertise.

When responding to invitations to handle manuscripts Associate Editors should:

• Aim to respond within 24 hours of receipt.
• Use the links within the email to accept or decline (see Appendix II).
• If declining, provide the reason (e.g. too busy or a COI), along with alternative suggestions for Associate or Guest Associate Editors.

When to Accept or Decline

Accept the invitation if:
• The submission is in your field.
• You have time.
• You have no competing interests.

Decline the invitation if:
• The submission is not in your field.
• You are not available (e.g. holiday, sabbatical, already handling several manuscripts).
• You have a competing interest.
Editors with the appropriate expertise to handle the manuscript.

Please note that Associate Editors will be given four days (with one reminder) to respond to an invitation before a second Associate Editor is invited. Individual invitations will only close when that editor has declined or another invited Associate Editor has agreed to handle the assignment. Therefore, in some cases, multiple Associate Editors will be invited to handle a single manuscript. Invited Associate Editors will receive a letter if another Associate Editor has agreed to take on the assignment before you have had a chance to respond.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Editorial Board members are responsible for the content of the journal and must fully evaluate each submission throughout the period of their editorial oversight.

After agreeing to handle a new submission, the Associate Editor should conduct an independent assessment to evaluate whether or not the manuscript fits within the journal scope. Associate Editors should make this initial decision within three days of accepting the invitation.

At this stage, the Associate Editor can:

1. **Reject** the manuscript without review.
   a. Barely (leaves the door open to resubmission of a significantly revised manuscript)
   b. Final
2. **Invite reviewers**.
3. **Open a discussion session** with other members of the *PLOS Pathogens* Editorial Board and the *PLOS Pathogens* Team.

To be considered for publication in *PLOS Pathogens*, any given manuscript must satisfy the following criteria:

- Originality
- High importance to researchers in the field
- High importance and broad interest to the community of researchers studying pathogens and pathogen-host interactions
- Rigorous methodology
- Substantial evidence for its conclusions

The full journal scope can be found in Appendix I.

Associate Editors should consider whether a manuscript abide by **PLOS editorial and publishing policies** and notify the *PLOS Pathogens* Team if they come aware of a breach of these policies. For instance, Associate Editors should...
should keep in mind whether the authors adhere to standards in their field for data availability, and adhere to all aspects of publication and research ethics. Further guidance on these policies can be found in Appendix V.

Associate Editors should carefully evaluate a manuscript before sending it for peer review; between 50-60% of the submissions PLOS Pathogens receives are rejected before review.

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW

If an Associate Editor believes a paper to be at or near the level required for PLOS Pathogens, they should send it out for external peer review upon accepting the assignment or no later than three working days after.

Selecting Suitable Reviewers

The selection of appropriate and responsive reviewers is paramount for the success of a review process judged on its rigor and timeliness.

Any qualified researcher with strong expertise in the topic of the submission can serve as a reviewer. Good reviewers:

- Are usually at postdoctoral level or above.
- Are actively conducting research and publishing work in the field of the manuscript.
- Do not have any competing interests (COIs) that would bias them either for or against the manuscript.

Associate Editors should consider the sum total of the expertise of all the reviewers invited to ensure that all aspects of the manuscript are fully evaluated.

To identify experts to assess the manuscripts they handle, Associate Editors:

- Apply their knowledge of qualified experts to objectively evaluate the manuscript.
- Search the Internet for related literature; the authors of these papers may be good reviewer candidates.
- Consider the suggested reviewers provided by the author, taking into account potential competing interests between these individuals and the authors. Research shows author-suggested reviewers tend to be less critical in their assessments of the work.

| Associate Editors should not act as an additional anonymous peer reviewer. |
| If an Associate Editor would like to include additional comments, or their own review of the submission, they should include this within the decision letter as comments from the editor. |
Inviting Reviewers
All contact with potential and engaged reviewers – invitations, reminders, and editorial correspondence - occurs through Editorial Manager (EM). Detailed instructions for performing these actions within EM can be found in Appendix II.

After logging in and accessing the “Invite Reviewers” link on the manuscript action links, Associate Editors should extend invitations to three reviewers (‘Inv’), and queue up at least three alternate reviewers (‘Alt’), with the aim of securing three submitted reviews.

Many reviewers will already be listed within EM. In these cases, simply check the email address to make sure it is the correct person and proceed to invite them. If the desired reviewer is not registered within EM, Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team to have the reviewer added to our system.

Please note reviewers will be automatically uninvited after six days if we’ve received no response. During this time, they will receive two reminders in addition to the initial invitation.

Alternate reviewers will be invited automatically if one of the original reviewers declines or fails to respond within the allotted time.

Monitoring the Review Process
The main focus of the Associate Editor during the review process is to:

- **Monitor the reviewers** agreed and completed.
- **Invite additional reviewers** if needed, to make sure evaluations are obtained from a collection of reviewers with relevant expertise.
- **Evaluate reviews as they are returned** to make sure they are appropriate and address the important aspects of the manuscript.
- **Notify the PLOS Pathogens Team** of any ethical concerns that arise during the assessment of the work.

The standard review deadline is 14 days. If a reviewer requests an extension:

- The PLOS Pathogens Staff will grant extensions of 1-2 weeks at a reviewers’ request.
- For longer extensions, the Associate Editor will also be asked to approve the request.
EM automatically notifies reviewers on their pending assignments, including late reviews. If papers experience delays, the PLOS Pathogens Team will then contact the Associate Editor with reminders and offers of assistance.

Reminder emails continue until the Associate Editor responds, so prompt replies are recommended.

**DECISIONS**

Once the expected number of reviewers has been received, Associate Editors will receive a confirmation email. At this point, the Associate Editor can find the paper in the “Submissions with Required Reviews Complete” on their Editor Main Menu.

If papers experience delays, the PLOS Pathogens Team may also email following the receipt of two reviews to see whether the Associate Editor has sufficient comments to proceed with a decision. In this case, the Associate Editor may need to terminate assignments for late reviewers. Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team before terminating outstanding reviewer assignments.

*Please be aware that the Associate Editor’s name will appear alongside the Section Editor’s on all decision letters to the authors, with the exception of Reject without Peer Review. The authors are unaware of the identity of the Associate Editor until the first decision is made.*

**Making a Decision**

On receipt of the expected reviewer comments, Associate Editors should read them carefully and consider all points raised in order to make an informed decision on the submission.

**General Guidelines:**

- When making the decision to send a manuscript out for external review, the Associate Editor must have a clear expectation that the study has sufficient potential to demonstrate the extent of advance we expect for publication in PLOS Pathogens.

- When external reviews are received, the items in “Major Issues: Key experiments required for acceptance” of the review form should receive particular scrutiny. Associate Editors should indicate in the decision letter specifically which of the experiments demanded are mandatory and which ones are not. Avoid sending blanket endorsements of every reviewer request. If the list of requested revisions is too long, we encourage Associate Editors to render a reject decision at this point.

- Minimize additional rounds of review and render the final decision at resubmission after revision. Only in exceptional circumstances should manuscripts be sent back to review.

---

**About Reviewer Comments**

All “Comments to Authors” are included in the decision letter as submitted. *Do not edit or remove them from the letter.*

Contact the PLOS Pathogens Team if:

- Any comments are defamatory, allege misconduct, or contain inappropriate language.
- It appears a reviewer has entered their comments in the wrong boxes (e.g. the comments to the editor are in the “Comments to Authors” box).
- Associate Editors should only edit reviews on rare occasions to remove a reviewer’s suggestion of an accept/reject/revise decision, or when comments are inflammatory. Associate Editors should never edit reviews or remove reviewer requests that they do not think are necessary. Instead, the Associate Editor should specifically comment on unnecessary reviewer requests in the decision letter. Please contact staff with any questions.

There are several decision types and associated template letters available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Render this decision if:</th>
<th>After the decision is made:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editor Accept</strong></td>
<td>• The authors have fully addressed all points you and the reviewers raised.</td>
<td>• The manuscript is sent to production for publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The paper is ready to publish.</td>
<td>• The authors do not have a chance to revise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There is no need for you to check over the manuscript another time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Revision</strong></td>
<td>• The clarity of the presentation needs improvement.</td>
<td>• Authors have 60 days to revise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The science is solid and well presented, with the evidence fully supporting all</td>
<td>• Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript and author’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conclusions made.</td>
<td>response to reviewers to decide whether further review is need or if a final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>decision can be made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Revision</strong></td>
<td>• The stated scientific conclusions require additional experiments.</td>
<td>• Authors have 60 days to revise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fundamental reworking of the presentation is required to ensure the science is sound</td>
<td>• Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript and authors’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and fully presented.</td>
<td>response to reviewers, and only assign to reviewers when absolutely necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reject After Review -</strong></td>
<td>• The paper has insurmountable scientific deficits.</td>
<td>• No action required unless authors request an appeal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closed</strong></td>
<td>• The subject matter is outside the scope of this journal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reject After Review -</strong></td>
<td>• Extensive revisions are required to meet the publication criteria.</td>
<td>• Authors have the opportunity to extensively revise their manuscript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open</strong></td>
<td>• Authors are unlikely to be able to resubmit in the standard 60 day time-frame given</td>
<td>• The revised manuscript is treated as a new submission, although it will usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for major revision decisions.</td>
<td>be returned to the same Associate Editor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reject Without Review -</strong></td>
<td>• The subject matter is outside the scope of this journal.</td>
<td>• No action required unless authors request an appeal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reject Without Review -</strong></td>
<td>• Extensive revisions are required to meet the publication criteria.</td>
<td>• Authors have the opportunity to extensively revise their manuscript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** Barely**</td>
<td>• Authors are unlikely to be able to resubmit in the standard 60 day time-</td>
<td>• The revised manuscript is treated as a new submission, although it will usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>frame.</td>
<td>be returned to the same Associate Editor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLOS ONE: Accept As Is (After Review)</td>
<td>PLOS ONE: Revise Before Accept</td>
<td>PLOS ONE: Accept Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manuscript has undergone peer review and is scientifically sound.</td>
<td>The manuscript has undergone peer review and is scientifically sound.</td>
<td>You have previously issued a PLOS ONE: Revise Before Accept decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The subject matter is outside the scope of the journal or does not meet PLOS Pathogen’s standards for novelty and impact.</td>
<td>The subject matter is outside the scope of the journal or does not meet PLOS Pathogen’s criteria for novelty and impact.</td>
<td>The authors have successfully addressed all points you and the reviewers have made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manuscript meets the PLOS ONE submission requirements.</td>
<td>The manuscript meets the requirements for publication in PLOS ONE.</td>
<td>The paper is ready to publish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paper is ready to publish.</td>
<td>The clarity of the presentation requires minimal revisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authors have 3 weeks to revise and accept transfer to PLOS ONE.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript to see if it satisfies the editorial revision requests and is ready for acceptance into ONE.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The SE will check the decision and may consult further with the Associate Editor and/or PLOS ONE if they have any concern of the manuscript’s eligibility for PLOS ONE.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authors have 3 weeks to accept the transfer to PLOS ONE.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manuscript Evaluation

\* If the manuscript requires language editing beyond minor grammatical problems, please notify the journal office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements for Publication in ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submissions in the following areas are not eligible for transfer to or acceptance in <em>PLOS ONE</em>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-primary research; e.g., reviews, opinions, study protocols, rebuttals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tobacco-funded research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*PLOS ONE* has specific editorial policies with regards to submissions in the following areas:

| • Research using vertebrate animal models in which death is an endpoint |
| • Clinical trials |

For additional information on the Accept to ONE process, see the [Accept to PLOS ONE Manual](#) on the Knowledge Base.

Submit a Decision

To submit a decision, Associate Editors should log in to EM and select the “Submit Editor’s Decision and Comments” link on the manuscript action links. The Associate Editor can then choose their decision type from the drop-down menu, and then proceed to the editable, draft decision letter.

When drafting their decision letter, Associate Editors should:

| • Customize the decision letter to clearly explain expectations of the author and reason for the decision. |
| • Indicate which of the reviewer comments are essential to address to meet the journal criteria for resubmission, and which are optional (e.g., changes that might improve the paper but are not required for publication). |
| • Synthesize the reviewers’ comments, selecting key phrases from the accompanying reviews to explain the reasoning behind the decision. |
| • Place minority reviewer comments or excessive requests in context of the decision and explain why the decision may seem to run counter to points made in the review. |
| • If rejecting the submission, make clear why the manuscript does not meet the criteria for publication, and refer to the pertinent reviewer comments (when reviews have been received). |
| • Check that all reviews and reviewer attachments are included. |

Uncertain About a Decision?

Utilize the wealth of expertise across the Editorial Board by opening a discussion with:

| • The Section Editor on the paper. |
| • Other members of the Editorial Board. |
| • The Editors-in-Chief (for serious scientific or ethical issues). |
| • A *PLOS ONE* editor for questions about a manuscript’s suitability for acceptance into *PLOS ONE*. See the [Accept to PLOS ONE Manual](#) for details. |
**Draft Decision Letter: Rejection**

If an Associate Editor decides to reject a submission, they may pull a few choice words from confidential comments into the decision letter to prevent an author appeal of a rejected manuscript. Explaining a decision with contextual evidence can decrease the possibility of an appeal on the decision with the author.

**Transfers**

- Research Articles not within the scope for PLOS Pathogens and rejected before review are referred to *PLOS ONE*. Associate Editors are empowered to remove the text recommending transfer to *PLOS ONE*, if they do not feel a suggested transfer is appropriate for scientific, ethical, or other reasons.
- Associate Editors can also suggest transfer to another PLOS Journal. Further information about the suite of PLOS Journals can be found in Appendix IX.
- Transfer between PLOS Journals does not guarantee that a paper will be reviewed or accepted, as clarified to the authors in the template decision letter text.

When ready to submit their decision, Associate Editors should click “Submit Decision with Draft Letter” as this will send the decision to the Section Editor for approval. This letter will *always* go to the Section Editor for approval and *not* directly to the author.

Section Editors acting as an Associate Editor should click “Submit Decision without notifying author” so the acting Section Editor can approve and send the decision.

Detailed instructions for submitting a decision within EM can be found [here](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources for Writing Decision Letters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Editors can find tips for writing decision letters as well as sample letter templates in the Editorial Board Knowledge Base.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Revisions**

Manuscripts returned after minor or major revisions are automatically reassigned to the same Associate Editor. The Associate Editor should then:

- Evaluate the revised manuscript and response to reviewers.
- Determine whether additional external peer review is necessary or a decision can be made.
- Re-reviews should be made only under exceptional circumstance, when the Associate Editor simply cannot evaluate whether the authors have responded appropriately to the reviewers.
- For those rare times when reviewer opinion must be solicited for a second round, the review process must cease on receipt of the additional reviews and the Associate Editor should then make a final decision, using their best scientific assessment.
- Contact the Section Editor if you are unsure of your course of action. The Section Editor’s role is to be available for consult in these situations.

Manuscript Evaluation
If reviewers need to be invited for a second round, Associate Editors should invite all or some of the reviewers who previously provided recommendations. Editors should follow the same process as for the initial round of reviewers. Please note, however, that the letter selection should be changed to “Reviewer Invitation on Revision”. New reviewers should only be invited if absolutely necessary.

APPEALS ON DECISIONS

_PLOS Pathogens_ encourages input from all community members regarding editorial and publishing policy. Appeals of manuscript decisions should, however, be:

a) Limited to the specific manuscript in question,

b) Made only by the corresponding author,

c) Sent by email to plospathogens@plos.org

If an Associate Editor receives an appeal directly, we ask that they forward this onto the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team, who can respond on their behalf.

All appeal requests are first evaluated by the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team, who decide whether the appeal should proceed based on our appeal criteria. If it is unclear, whether the appeal meets our criteria the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team will respond to the authors to request further information.

Appeals of decisions made before review will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeals will only be considered when a reviewer or editor is thought to have made a significant factual error or b) when his/her objectivity is compromised by a documented competing interest, and when a reversal based on either of these grounds would change the original decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If an appeal meets the criteria above, the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team will open a discussion with the Associate Editor and Section Editor who rendered the original decision. This discussion post will highlight the grounds of the appeal and include the author’s letter at the bottom.

The Associate Editor, along with the Section Editor, then consider the appeal and respond to the discussion to confirm whether they would like to accept or reject the appeal within 7 days of the initial discussion post.

If a reject decision is made (the original decision is upheld), the Associate Editor should draft a short paragraph to outline the reasons for this decision. The journal office will send the final decision onto the authors.

If an accept decision is made (the original decision is rescinded), the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team will consult with the editors to determine the appropriate next steps.

Please note that if the authors have cited a competing interest as the grounds of the appeal, the _PLOS Pathogens_ Team will invite the Editors-in-Chief to comment on the appeal instead of the original editor. This is not a reflection on an editor’s editorial judgment, but we have to take this route due to the concerns of authors.
Our full policy on competing interests can be found here: http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/competing-interests

EDITORIAL SUPPORT

As Associate Editors handle manuscripts, they may encounter situations where they feel that additional editorial input is needed. We strongly encourage Associate Editors to work with the other members of the PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board and the journal office in such cases.

Working with the Editorial Board
Associate Editors are encouraged to consult with each other and take advantage of the breadth of expertise and experience across the PLOS Pathogens community. A searchable list of Editorial Board members can be found at: http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/editorial-board

- For manuscript-specific concerns, communicate with other Editorial Board members via the Editorial Manager “Discussion” function (see Appendix II).
- For general discussions of PLOS Pathogens policies and procedures, participate in the Editorial Board Knowledge Base discussion forums (see Appendix VII).

Working with Staff
If Associate Editors experience any problems or complications handling manuscripts, the PLOS Pathogens Team is on hand to assist with a broad range of issues, including technical problems with Editorial Manager and dealing with substantive scientific and policy issues for specific manuscripts.

The PLOS Pathogens Team can be reached either via:

- Telephone: +1-415-568-3457
- Email: plospathogens@plos.org

Please note that the PLOS Pathogens team are based in San Francisco and are therefore only available Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm Pacific Time.
In the preceding Handbook (pages 1 - 11), we reviewed the Associate Editor’s role, providing an overview of the review process from the time the Editor agrees to handle a submission to the final decision, including essential steps and the most important factors to bear in mind. The Handbook can be read chronologically and is designed to provide the fundamental information needed to participate in the peer review process as an Associate Editor.

In the Appendices (pages 12 - 51), we'll go into greater depth on a range of subjects including the PLOS Pathogens scope, our editorial and publishing policies, and detailed instructions for the use of Editorial Manager. Unlike the Handbook, the Appendices need not be read in order. Consult appropriate sections when specific questions or issues arise.

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APPENDIX I. THE PLOS PATHOGENS SCOPE AND PUBLICATION CRITERIA

Bacteria, fungi, parasites, prions and viruses cause a plethora of diseases that have important medical, agricultural, and economic consequences. Moreover, the study of microbes continues to provide novel insights into such fundamental processes as the molecular basis of cellular and organismal function.

PLOS Pathogens reflects the full breadth of research in these areas by publishing outstanding original articles that significantly advance the understanding of pathogens and how they interact with their host organisms. Topics include (but are not limited to) adaptive and innate immune defenses as well as pathogen countermeasures, emerging pathogens, evolution, genomics and gene regulation, model host organisms, pathogen-cell biology, pathogenesis, prions, proteomics and signal transduction, rational vaccine design, structural biology, and virulence factors.

The journal will not consider purely descriptive studies, such as those that solely identify a new genomic sequence of a related pathogen or a series of related pathogens, the isolation of pathogen variants, or a new strain or type based only on sequence analysis or correlative studies of host and pathogen genotypes.

In most cases, functional predictions or inferences based on genome sequence analysis will also require additional experimental validation that directly tests the prediction/inference and yields novel conclusions about mechanistic models or pathogenesis. Instances where inferences about potential functions can be supported by association studies of genotype-phenotype combined with existing functional data, may also be appropriate, pending approval by the editors.

We encourage authors to submit a presubmission inquiry to determine whether a given study might fit these guidelines. Genomics submissions may go through an initial consultation by our Genomics Editors, in order to ensure our criteria are applied evenly across the journal. The committee membership can be accessed here.

To be considered for publication in PLOS Pathogens, any given manuscript must satisfy the following criteria:

- Originality
- High importance to researchers in the field
- High importance and broad interest to the community of researchers studying pathogens and pathogen-host interactions
- Rigorous methodology
- Substantial evidence for its conclusions
APPENDIX II. WORKING WITH EDITORIAL MANAGER

The *PLOS Pathogens* submission system is called Editorial Manager (EM). In this appendix, we provide detailed instructions for performing tasks as an Associate Editor within this system, including:

- Getting Started
- Registering and Signing In with ORCID
- Setting Unavailable Dates
- The Associate Editor Main Menu
- Responding to Invitations
- Viewing Submissions and Related Information
- Initiating a Discussion
- Inviting Reviewers
- Monitoring the Review Process
- Submitting the Decision

The *PLOS Pathogens* Team are also on hand to help and provide additional guidance.

**Getting Started**

a) Go to: [https://www.editorialmanager.com/ppathogens/default.aspx](https://www.editorialmanager.com/ppathogens/default.aspx)
b) Use the Editor Login button to access the tasks for your editor role

c) Click **UPDATE MY INFORMATION** from the navigation links in the top-left corner of the page to verify the information in your profile is correct.

d) We require a full institutional name, country, phone number and your preferred email address(es).
e) Associate Editors are highly encouraged to select subject areas of expertise by completing the **Select Personal Classifications** section.

> The more specific information we have regarding an Associate Editor’s expertise, the more likely it will be that they are invited to the appropriate submission.

i. **Click Select Personal Classifications**

ii. In the new window, use the **Search** function to identify classification within the PLOS taxonomy to represent your areas of expertise.
iii. Select the tick box next to the relevant classifications and click **Add** to list these as your personal classifications.

![Select Personal Classifications](image)

iv. To rank your keywords, click **Submit and Continue to Rankings**

v. On the following page, you can select your experience ranking as **Low**, **Medium** or **High**.

![Rank Personal Classifications](image)

vi. When you’re ready to proceed, click **Submit**

Associate Editors can also add keywords by completing the **Editor Personal Keywords** section. Keywords are useful for covering subject areas not included in the classification taxonomy. **Keywords should not be used as a substitute to classifications, and all relevant classifications must also be added.**

f) Once you have entered all the relevant information, click **Submit** at the bottom of the page to save the additions to the account.

Registering and Signing In with ORCID

In an effort to simplify our publications process and create a more thorough, networked picture of our community, PLOS is encouraging all Associate Editors to update their profiles in Editorial Manager (EM) to include an ORCID. PLOS now requires corresponding authors to provide their ORCID when submitting a manuscript.

Appendix II 19
ORCID is a unique digital identifier that differentiates your work from that of other researchers with similar names across a variety of platforms including grants, publications, online notebooks, data sets, citations, and more. It can save you time in identifying yourself, and help you avoid entering the same information over and over on different websites.

To submit an ORCID, Associate Editors can sign in to EM at https://www.editorialmanager.com/ppathogens and navigate to their personal profile by selecting the “Update my Information” link in the upper left of the screen. The space for the ORCID appears about halfway down the page, just below the email field.

Ensure the changes are saved before leaving the profile page. If Associate Editors do not have an ORCID yet, they can obtain one using the link on the EM profile page, or by visiting the website directly at orcid.org.

Once an ORCID is entered in EM, it can be used to sign in to the system any time.

Setting Unavailable Dates
In advance of an absence, Associate Editors should enter their unavailability in EM. To do this:

a) Click UPDATE MY INFORMATION from the navigation links in the top-left corner of the page.
b) Scroll down to the **Additional Information** section and click **Unavailable Dates**

![Additional Information](image)

- **Unavailable Dates**

  c) Click **Add New Unavailable Date**
  d) Enter the **Start Date** and **End Date**
  e) Within the **Reason**: field Associate Editors should specify whether they are available to handle revised submissions.

![Reason field](image)

  f) Click **Submit** and then **Submit** again from the **Update My Information** page.

*See [here](link) for an instructional video.*
The Associate Editor Main Menu

When an Associate Editor logs in they will see their Associate Editor Main Menu. From this menu, the Associate Editor can view all their assignments.

Submissions with:
These folders display all submissions assigned to the Associate Editor by the number of reviews received.

Search
Search Submissions: From here, the Associate Editors can search submissions using a variety of different criteria including the manuscript number, DOI, title and author name.

Editor ‘To-Do’ List
My Pending Assignments: Displays the total number of submissions currently requiring attention from the Associate Editor.

New Invitations: This folder contains submissions with open invitations. The Associate Editor can either agree or decline to handle the submission from this folder.

New Assignments: This folder contains any submission or revised submissions that are waiting for the Associate Editor’s initial decision. From here, the Associate Editor can either submit a decision or invite reviewers.
**Submissions with Required Reviews Complete:** This folder contains all submissions for which the required number of reviews has been submitted. The Associate Editor can access the submission here to submit their decision, or invite additional Reviewers.

**Submissions Requiring Additional Reviewers:** This folder contains submissions under review that have fewer than the required number of reviewers invited and/or assigned. The standard required number of reviewers is set to three within EM.

**Submissions with One or More Late Reviews:** This folder contains any submission that has one or more late Reviewers.

**Reviews in Progress:** Displays the total number of submissions currently under review.

**Reviewers Invited – No Response:** This folder contains submissions with one or more outstanding Reviewer invitation.

**Submissions Under Review:** This folder contains any submission that has one or more Reviewers who have agreed to review, but have not yet submitted their review.

Submissions with Decisions

**My Assignments with Decision:** This folder contains the submissions handled by the Associate Editor on which a decision has been made.

**My Assignments with Final Disposition:** This folder contains the submissions handled by the Associate Editor, which have had a final disposition set (either accept or reject).
Responding to Invitations
From the Associate Editor Main Menu an Associate Editor may:

a) Click on New Invitations to find a list of all the manuscripts for which they have received an invitation.

![New Invitations](image1)

b) From the manuscript action links click Yes I will take this Assignment or No I will not take this Assignment to accept or decline the invitation.

![Manuscript Action Links](image2)

i. If an Associate Editor declines an invitation, they should provide the reasons for this on the following screen and click Submit.

See here for an instructional video.

Viewing Submissions and Related Information
Once an Associate Editor agrees to handle a submission, it will appear in the New Assignments folder on their Associate Editor Main Menu.

To learn about the work:

a) Click New Assignments to access the submission.

![New Assignments](image3)

b) Click View Submission from the manuscript action links.
i. High-resolution versions of each figure can be accessed by selecting the blue link at the top of the page each figure appears on.

ii. The Supporting Information files and Related Manuscripts (if included) can be accessed via blue links at the end of the submission file.

(c) It is also possible to view the author-submitted files independently through the File Inventory action link, which will provide direct links to each component of the submission.

d) Check the Details page by clicking Details from the manuscript action links.

i. Within the Reviewers section, Associate Editors can view the Author Suggested Reviewers and Opposed Reviewers.

ii. By scrolling further down, Associate Editors also have access to the Additional Information provided by the authors on submission, including the Financial Disclosure, Competing Interests, Ethics Statement and Data Availability Statement.
Initiating a Discussion
Throughout the editorial process, Associate Editors are able to call on their fellow Editorial Board members and the *PLOS Pathogens* Team via Editorial Manager’s discussion feature.

To open a new discussion

a) Click *Initiate Discussion* from the manuscript action links.

![Initiate Discussion](image)

b) Enter a **Topic** at the top of the page, or choose **Topic Template: Editor Consult**.

c) Enter your discussion message in the field **Initial Comments**.

![Initial Comments](image)

d) **Search** for your chosen participants by name or email using the available **Criterion**.

   i. Always add the participant first name "PLOS Pathogens" last name "Staff" when opening a new discussion, so the *PLOS Pathogens* Team can be of assistance.

![Criterion](image)

e) Tick all the boxes to allow participant access to the manuscript, reviews and draft decision letter.

   i. Check that the participant is **Available during next 7 days** by checking the far right column. This will state **Unavailable** if the participant has entered unavailability dates within EM.
f) Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.

![Customize Letters Button]

Associate Editors should **not** open a discussion by selecting **Start Discussion WithoutSending Letters** as this will mean that their participants are not notified of the discussion.

g) On this page, Associate Editors have the option to **Customize** the discussion invite if they wish.
h) Finally, click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters** to open the discussion.

If there is an existing discussion, Associate Editors can open a new discussion by:

a) Selecting **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.

![Manuscript Action Links]

b) Clicking **Start New Topic**.
c) Following the same procedure as before.

To continue an existing discussion:

a) From the Profile page in EM, navigate to **Submissions with Active Discussions**. A blue icon with a number will appear here to indicate new responses to open discussions.

![Editor 'To-Do' List]

**My Pending Assignments (51)**
- New Submissions (3)
- Revised Submissions (6)
- New Submissions Requiring Assignment (11)
- Revised Submissions Requiring Assignment (0)
- Submissions Sent Back to Author for Approval (21)
- Submissions with Required Reviews Complete (0)
- Submissions Requiring Additional Reviewers (0)
- Submissions with One or More Late Reviews (0)
- Submissions with Active Discussions (10)
b) Select **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.

c) 

d) Click **View**.

![Image of Discussions section in manuscript action links]

e) To respond to a discussion comment:

i. Enter comments within the field **Comments** and click **Post**.

```
Comments:
```

f) To add new participants:

i. Click **Add Participants**.

```
Participant | # Posts | Latest Post | View Reviews and Comments | Download Files | View Draft Decision Letter | Send E-mail
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
An Editor | 1 | Aug 19 2015 10:10AM | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Send E-mail
```

ii. **Search** for your chosen participants by name or email using the available **Criterion**.

iii. Tick all the boxes to allow participant access to the manuscript, reviews and draft decision letter.

iv. Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.

v. Click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters**.

g) To conclude the discussion:

i. Click **Conclude Discussion**.
To reopen a discussion:
   a) Select **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.
   b) Click **View**.
   c) Click **Re-open Discussion**.
   d) Enter the discussion message in the field **Comments**.
   e) Select the other editors or staff with whom to discuss these comments.
      i. Tick all the boxes to allow participant access to the manuscript, reviews and draft decision letter.
      ii. Note that the original participants will not be included and will therefore need to be selected again at this stage.
      iii. Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.
      iv. Click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters**.

Inviting Reviewers
If an Associate Editors decides to send a manuscript out for review, they should do so within EM. To invite reviewers, Associate Editors should:
   a) Click **Invite Reviewers** from the manuscript action links.
   b) Click **Go** under **Reviewer Search**.
c) **Search** for reviewers by current email address (this is the most reliable way of getting an up-to-date profile).

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Criterion} & \text{Is/Is not} & \text{Selector} & \text{Value} & \text{AND/AND} & \text{Remove} \\
\hline
\text{E-mail Address} & \checkmark & \text{Contains} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\text{First Name} & \checkmark & \text{Equal To} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\text{Last Name} & \checkmark & \text{Equal To} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\text{Last Name} & \checkmark & \text{Begins With} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\text{Last Name} & \checkmark & \text{Begins With} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\text{Last Name} & \checkmark & \text{Begins With} & \text{AND} & \checkmark & \text{Remove} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

i. List the **Criterion** as **E-mail Address**, the selector as **Contains** and the **Value** as the email address.

ii. To search for multiple reviewers in parallel, put **OR** at the end of the line and fill in the next line for the email address of the next reviewer.

iii. To search by name, list the **Criterion** as **Last Name**, the selector as **Equal to** and the **Value** as the last name, and then on the next line list the **Criterion** as **First Name**, the selector as **Equal to** and the **Value** as the first name.

iv. Searching by **Classification** is not recommended.

d) Select the box in the **Inv.** column to invite a reviewer immediately, or select the box in the **Alt.** column to line up the reviewer as an alternative. Alternate reviewers are automatically invited when someone decline.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Select As} & \text{Inv.} & \text{Alt.} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

e) Having made the selection, Associate Editors can continue to find reviewers using the search fields and EM will remember their previous selections.

f) Having made reviewer selections, click **Proceed**.

g) From the following page, Associate Editors can change the **Letter** selection and **Customize** each letter if they would like to add anything to the default text.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Name} & \text{Letter} & \text{Days to Review} & \text{Do Not Invite} \\
\hline
\text{Reviewer (Reviewer)} & \text{Reviewer Invitation} & 14 & \checkmark \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

h) Once ready, click **Confirm Selections and Proceed**
See [here](#) for an instructional video.

### Revised Manuscripts

Associate Editors will need to change the Letter selection for revisions to **Reviewer Invitation on Revision** to ensure reviewers are aware that they have previously reviewed the article for the journal.

See [here](#) for an instructional video.

### Monitoring the Review Process

During the review process, Associate Editors can find further information about the status of the reviews from the **Reviewer Selection Summary** and **Details** pages.

#### Details

Further information about the status of the reviews can be found from the **Details** page:

- a) Select **Details** from the manuscripts action links.
- b) Scroll down to the **Reviewers** section to find a list of reviewers.
- c) From here Associate Editors can view information such as:
  - i. The **Review Status**
  - ii. The **Date Review Due**
  - iii. The **Elapsed Days**

![Reviewers](#)

If the *PLOS Pathogens* Team has granted a reviewer extension, they will update the **Date Review Due** in this section.

### Reviewer Selection Summary

The **Reviewer Selection Summary** provides further information about the reviewer invitation status and the number of expected reviews.

- a) Select **Invite Reviewers** from the manuscript action links.
- b) From the top of this page, Associate Editors can alter the number of required reviews from the standard three:
Further down, Associate Editors can find the **Selected Reviewers**. From here they can:

1. View the status of the reviewer invitations.
2. **Un-assign** agreed reviewers or **Un-invite** reviewers with open invitations.
3. View the reasons for a reviewer declining, by clicking **Decline Reason**.
4. Check whether there are any outstanding **Alternate Reviewers**.

### Submitting the Decision

Once the expected reviews have been received, the Associate Editor will be notified via email. Within EM, they can now find the submission within the folder **Submissions with Required Reviews Complete** on their **Associate Editor Main Menu**.
To view the reviews, Associate Editors should:

a) Select **View Reviews and Comments** from the manuscript action links.

b) On this page, the Associate Editor can view the reviewers, their suggested decision and whether any reviews have been uploaded as attachments.

c) To view the reviewer comments, click the suggested decision type for each reviewer individually.

d) The following page shows the reviewers **Comments to Editor** and **Comments to Author**.
   i. If the reviewer has uploaded an attachment as part of their review, this can be downloaded from this page.

Note that reviewer recommendations are for the use of the editor and senior editors only; the authors will see the comments within the review, but not the recommendation itself.

Note that the system scrubs Microsoft files of meta data automatically, so that it is safe to send these reviews on to the authors without breaking confidentiality.
Once an Associate Editor is ready to make their decision, they can submit this by:

a) Select **Submit Editor’s Decision and Comments** from the manuscript action links.

b) Select the Decision from the drop-down menu at the top of this page.

c) DO NOT enter your comments into the **Confidential Comments to Editor** or **Comments to Author** fields. These fields display the reviewers’ comments only.

d) Click **Proceed** and then **Proceed** again

e) This takes you to the editable decision letter. Associate Editors are encouraged to enter the reasons for their decision within this letter. Associate Editors **should not** enter their comments as an additional anonymous review.
f) If there are reviewer attachments, check that the **Allow Author Access** box is ticked for the attachment towards the bottom of the page.

![Attachment Table]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Uploaded By</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>File Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Upload Date</th>
<th>Allow Author Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revision 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manuscript.doc</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.4 Sep 25 2015 00:30AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Download**
- **Download Sanitized Copy**

**g) When ready to submit the decision, click Submit Decision with Draft Letter.**

- **Cancel**
- **Submit Decision with Draft Letter**
- **Preview Letter**
- **Save**
- **Save and Close**

- The draft decision will be sent to the Senior Editor’s desktop to review, and the Senior Editor will send it onto the authors.
APPENDIX III. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLICATION PROCESS
Presubmission Inquiry

Presubmission inquiries are an optional part of the PLOS Pathogens submission process. Although they are encouraged if an author is unsure of whether or not their Research Article or Front matter piece is appropriate for PLOS Pathogens.

Submitting a presubmission inquiry enables authors to receive a fast response from a Section Editor as to the suitability of the article for the journal. All the author needs to provide is a cover letter and abstract.

The Section Editor will review the information provided and can then either encourage or discourage the full submission. In some cases, the Section Editor may consult with an Associate Editor via a discussion before making a decision.

Submission

All submissions to PLOS Pathogens first undergo an initial technical check, during which journal staff consider whether the authors have included all the necessary materials for submission. Manuscripts that pass this step are then assigned to a Section Editor by the PLOS Pathogens Team, ready for editorial consideration.

Preprints

PLOS encourages authors to post preprints as a way to accelerate the dissemination of research. Authors of manuscripts in biology and the life sciences have the option to concurrently post their manuscript to the bioRxiv preprint server as part of PLOS Pathogens initial submission.

Editors will be notified via email if handling a manuscript with an associated bioRxiv preprint.

PLOS Pathogens encourages editors to consider comments and feedback available on the preprint record to inform their editorial decision, and where relevant, editors may incorporate those comments in their editorial feedback to authors.

Editorial Process

Our aim is to provide all authors with an efficient, courteous, and constructive editorial process. To achieve its required level of quality, PLOS Pathogens is highly selective in the manuscripts that it publishes; rejections rates are high. To ensure the fairest and most objective decision-making, the editorial process is run as a partnership between the PLOS Pathogens Editors-in-Chief, a team of Section Editors, and a group of academic experts who act as Associate Editors. These individuals are leaders in their fields and represent the full breadth of pathogen-related research.

Initial Evaluation

Submitted manuscripts are first reviewed by a Section Editor, who may decide to reject the paper or send it on to an Associate Editor for further review. The Associate Editor is most often a member of the PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board, but occasionally a Guest Editor who is not an official member of the Editorial Board is invited to serve in this capacity. The Associate Editor (or Guest Editor) evaluates the paper and decides whether
it describes a sufficient body of work to support a major advance in a particular field. If so, the paper is sent out for external peer review, at which stage the technical and scientific merits of the work are carefully considered.

Peer Review Process
If the manuscript is sent for external review, the Associate Editor must then identify and invite suitable reviewers, monitor the review process, and evaluate the reviews when they are submitted to determine when it is time to make a decision. Associate Editors work to secure three reviewers, however, if they have sufficient comments having received two reviews they may proceed with a decision.

The selection of appropriate and responsive reviewers is paramount for the success of the review process. We decide on reviewers for a particular manuscript based on many factors, including expertise, reputation, specific recommendations of authors and other Editorial Board members, and the Associate Editor’s own knowledge of a reviewer's past performance.

Decisions
Once the reviews have been received and considered by the Associate Editor, they will submit their decision, along with a draft decision letter, to the Section Editor for approval. The Section Editor will then send this decision letter to the corresponding author. The decision will be within one of the following categories:

- Reject
  - Reject after Review (closed)
  - Reject after Review (open)
  - Reject and accept to ONE as-is
  - Reject and accept to one with Minor Revision
- Major revision
- Minor revision
- Accept

Revisions
If a minor or major revision decision is selected, the authors will have 60 days to revise their manuscript.

Upon resubmission, articles go through another round of technical and ethical checks, performed by journal staff. Manuscripts that pass this step are then assigned directly back to the Associate Editor (unless travel, new competing interests, or other situations require a different associate editor to be assigned) ready for further editorial consideration. The cycle of manuscript review and revision will then continue until the manuscript is accepted or rejected.

Production and Publication
Before formal acceptance of the article for publication, the manuscript and all related files will be checked by PLOS staff for a final quality control check, to ensure they comply with all essential formatting and manuscript preparation requirements. Staff members may send requests to authors to reformat their manuscripts to address issues including data availability, figure quality, table formatting, and equation and algorithm formatting.

Appendix III
Once formally accepted, the authors’ files are transferred into our production system and will be carefully tagged to general XML and PDF files. Manuscripts will not be subject to detailed copyediting, however, authors will have the opportunity to proof the PDF files.

PLOS Pathogens will publish an early version of the manuscript in advance of the final article at the same time that the author receives the proof. The date the early version is posted will be the article’s publication date and the final version will be published with the same URL and DOI.

PLOS Pathogens publishes on a daily basis at 11am PST/ 2pm EST. Our articles are archived in PubMed Central, usually within about 48 -72 hours.

Post-Publication Activity

Post-Publication Discussion
We encourage post-publication discussion at PLOS Pathogens. Editors and readers should feel free to post a comment and share their thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of the paper.

Associate Editors can initiate a discussion on a paper by logging into the PLOS Pathogens publication website (which is independent of the journal submission system), and adding a comment via the Comments tab on the article page. Comments from the paper’s Associate Editors help to promote reader participation and can add critical insight and interpretation to the published paper.

We also appreciate tweets (follow us @PLOSPathogens) and encourage editors to visit our blog shared across the PLOS Medicine journals (PLOS Pathogens, PLOS NTDs, and PLOS Medicine), Speaking of Medicine.

Corrections
In some cases, errors or concerns about misconduct arises after publication. Such issues may come to the attention of the PLOS Pathogens Team via the authors, a member of the Editorial Board, or readers through various mediums, including email and the online commenting system.

PLOS Pathogens staffs individually evaluate each case to determine the type of correction based on the nature of the error and consider how it would best be corrected on the PLOS journal website as well as in the external archives and databases with which PLOS shares records (e.g., PubMed Central and PubMed/MEDLINE). If a requested correction might affect (or appear to affect) the results of a manuscript, the PLOS Pathogens Team will consult the editors who handled the paper for their advice on the severity of the error and how to proceed.

Corrections take the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>On PLOS site</th>
<th>PubMed, PubMed Central, &amp; MEDLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note</td>
<td>Does not significantly affect scientific understanding of article or publication record</td>
<td>Author submits online comment attached to article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher’s Note</td>
<td>Does not significantly affect scientific understanding of article or publication (introduced by PLOS)</td>
<td>PLOS submits online comment to article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Correction</td>
<td>Significantly affects scientific understanding of article and/or publication record</td>
<td>PLOS publishes correction linked to original article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Expression of Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression of Concern</th>
<th>Cannot clearly determine whether concerns affect scientific understanding of article or indicate potential misconduct</th>
<th>PLOS publishes expression of concern linked to original article</th>
<th>Expression of concern indexed and linked to original article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Retraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retraction</th>
<th>Overall findings of the article are not reliable, either for genuine error or misconduct</th>
<th>PLOS publishes retraction linked to original article</th>
<th>Retraction indexed and linked to original article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

PLOS participates in the CrossMark service, a multi-publisher initiative to provide a standard way for readers to locate the most up-to-date version of an article. The CrossMark logo is displayed both on the HTML and the PDF version of the article. Clicking on the CrossMark logo will tell you if there have been any updates (e.g. corrections, retractions or expression of concern) to the version of the work you are viewing. In addition, formal corrections, expressions of concern, and retractions are published in the PubMed Central archive (PMC) and reflected in the PubMed/MEDLINE databases.
APPENDIX IV. FRONT MATTER AND OTHER CONTENT

The front section of PLOS Pathogens is a forum for the publication of articles of broad interest to the community of researchers studying pathogens and pathogen-host interactions.

Articles in the magazine section will mostly be commissioned, but we welcome your ideas for articles. Interested authors should first submit a presubmission inquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front Matter at PLOS Pathogens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews</strong>: These are peer-reviewed articles on rapidly advancing or topical areas in pathogen research and of broad interest to the entire pathogens community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinions</strong>: The Opinions section is intended to provide a place for the expression of views on topical, emerging or controversial issues ranging from experimental science to those involving science and public-health policy, education and training. It is also a forum in which colleagues can respond, with room for speculation, to previously stated opinions or observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editorials</strong>: Written by the journal’s editors, these occasional pieces can cover announcements, highlights of journal content, position statements, and journal updates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearls</strong>: A &quot;Pearl&quot; is a mini-review addressing a topic of relevance and importance within the wide-ranging field of pathogens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Matters</strong>: The Research Matters series allows individual scientists to comment on the diverse ways that fundamental research into pathogens can have real, and sometimes unexpected, impacts on public health and human knowledge in general, and matters in the larger context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information about these article types can be found here: [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/other-article-types](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/other-article-types)

There are no publication charges associated with these articles.

Front matter articles are handled by our Front Matter Editors:

- **Opinions Editors**
- **Reviews Editors**
- **Pearls Editors**

Collections

In order to highlight specific topics, from time to time PLOS Pathogens gathers together collections of articles. These can contain both research and front matter articles, although the criteria for inclusion differs between collections.

There are also several cross-journal collections, containing articles from across the suite of PLOS journals, which are managed by the PLOS Collections Team.

For a current list of PLOS Pathogens collections visit our collections page: [http://www.ploscollections.org/static/ppatCollections](http://www.ploscollections.org/static/ppatCollections)
APPENDIX V. EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING POLICIES

This appendix is designed to give an introduction to the *PLOS Pathogens* editorial and publishing policies. We highlight specific issues and policies that Associate Editors may regularly encounter.

This is not designed to be a complete guide and Associate Editors are encouraged to review the full list of editorial and publishing policies here: [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/editorial-and-publishing-policies](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/editorial-and-publishing-policies).

Associate Editors should notify the *PLOS Pathogens* Team **immediately** if they become aware of a breach of an editorial or publishing policy.

### Competing Interests

PLOS defines a competing interest (also known as a competing interest or COI) as any relationship that interferes with, *or could reasonably be perceived as interfering with*, the complete and objective presentation, peer review, editorial decision-making, or publication of a manuscript. Competing interests can arise in relationship to an organization or another person. Such relationships may be:

- Professional
- Personal
- Financial

The following are examples of possible competing interest-related breaches of publication ethics:

- An author does not fully declare a competing interest
- A reviewer submits a review for which he or she has a competing interest
- An Associate Editor handles a manuscript for which he or she has a competing interest

Declaring all potential competing interests is a requirement at PLOS and is integral to the transparent reporting of research. Editors and reviewers must declare their own competing interests and if necessary disqualify themselves from involvement in the assessment of a manuscript.

Common reasons for editors and reviewers to recuse themselves from the peer review process may include but are not limited to:

- They work at the same institution or organization as an author, currently or recently
- They collaborate with an author, currently or recently
- They have published with an author during the past 5 years
- They have held grants with an author, currently or recently
- They have a personal relationship with an author that does not allow them to evaluate the manuscript objectively
Associate Editors should consider whether they have a competing interest and if so decline to edit a submission, including the reason for this in their response. If an Associate Editor discovers they have a competing interest whilst evaluating a submission, they should notify the PLOS Pathogens Team and recuse themselves.

Associate Editors are also responsible for considering author and reviewer competing interests when making editorial decisions.

The full competing interest policy can be found here: [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/competing-interests](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/competing-interests)

**Reviewer Exclusions**

Upon submission of a manuscript, authors are asked whether they wish to exclude any specific Associate Editors or reviewers from the peer review of their article. We ask that Associate Editors respect these requests so long as this does not interfere with the objective and thorough assessment of the article.

Associate Editors can find a list of any author opposed reviewers by selecting the manuscript action link Invite Reviewers and the clicking Author's Reviewer Preferences. This information can also be found on the Details page of the manuscript.

If evaluation by an opposed reviewer is required, Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team prior to inviting this reviewer.

**Confidentiality**

Editors are required to treat all submitted manuscripts in strict confidence. We expect that editors will not make use of any material or take advantage of any information they gain through the peer review process.

Further information can be found here: [http://journals.plos.org/plosntds/s/ethical-publishing-practice#loc-confidentiality](http://journals.plos.org/plosntds/s/ethical-publishing-practice#loc-confidentiality)

**Sharing of Data, Materials and Software**

Publication at PLOS is conditional upon the agreement of the authors to make freely available any materials and information described in their publication that may be reasonably requested by others.

On submission, authors are asked to complete a Data Availability Statement, which will be included on the published articles, if accepted. Whilst performing their technical checks, the PLOS Pathogens Team will check whether a submission meets the journal’s requirements and may request the advice of the Associate Editor as a subject matter expert.

Associate Editors are encouraged to ready the full policy in full, along with its FAQs which cover questions such as “To what data does this policy apply?” and “What are the exceptions to making the data publicly available?”

When evaluating a manuscript, we ask that Associate Editors keep in mind whether the authors adhere to standards in their field for data availability, and whether all materials and information that could be reasonably requested by others has been made freely available. Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team if they identify any problems.

Appendix V
Publication and Research Ethics
Maintaining high ethical standards is collaboration between the PLOS Pathogens Team and Editorial Board, and in many cases the Associate Editor’s expertise and subject area knowledge makes them better suited to identify potential misconduct.

Associate Editors should consider all aspects of publication and research ethics when considering a manuscript for publication.

If an Associate Editor becomes aware of potential problems, they should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team.

Publication Ethics
All PLOS Journals are members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), abide by its Code of Conduct and aim to adhere to its Best Practice Guidelines. In cases of suspected or alleged misconduct, the PLOS Pathogens Team will contact the handling editors and Editor-in-Chief, and work with them to resolve the issue following the relevant COPE flowchart.

Further information about our Publication Ethics Policies can be found here:

Suspected Plagiarism:
PLOS has incorporated Similarity Check, powered by iThenticate, into its journal-wide submission system in order to screen submitted content for originality before publication. PLOS Pathogens screens a subset of articles at the first revision stage. The PLOS Pathogens Team will assess cases of suspected plagiarism and contact the authors where necessary. We may also ask the advice of the handling editors in this process.

Please note that not all articles are screened and Associate Editors should therefore contact the PLOS Pathogens Team if they have any concerns.

Research Ethics
On submission, authors are asked to submit an ethics statement if their study involved human participants, specimens or tissue samples, or vertebrate animals, embryos or tissues. The PLOS Pathogens Team will check that the statement provided meets the journal requirements during their technical checks. Associate Editors should, however, consider research ethics whilst evaluating a submission and notify the PLOS Pathogens Team if they identify a problem.

The PLOS policy on human and animal research can be found here:
http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/animal-research

Biosecurity and Dual Use Research of Concern
PLOS recognizes that certain research may fall into the category of "dual use research of concern". This is defined by the NSABB as any "biological research with legitimate scientific purpose that may be misused to pose a biologic threat to public health and/or national security." As an Open Access publisher, PLOS remains committed to the widespread dissemination of research while being sensitive to the issues of responsible publication standards. We expect that the potential risks of publishing a scientific paper will outweigh the
benefits in only the rarest circumstances. On occasion, PLOS reserves the right to consider manuscript submissions within this context. In addition to the usual scientific scrutiny, such submissions may also be referred to an internal PLOS Dual Use Committee for further deliberation.

When handling a manuscript describing such dual use research of concern, the Associate Editor should contact the PLOS Pathogens Team to discuss how to proceed.
APPENDIX VI. THE PLOS PATHOGENS EDITORIAL BOARD

Organizational Chart

Editorial Advisory Board
The Editorial Advisors play a unique part in the leadership of PLOS Pathogens and help shape the journal to meet the needs of the scientific community. They are rarely invited to handle papers directly; instead Editorial Advisors are consulted on manuscripts on situations where their expertise and advice are needed by the handling editors.

Editors-in-Chief
The Editors-in-Chief (EiCs) provide overall leadership of the journal and the Editorial Board, and are the main point of contact between the Editorial Board and PLOS. The EiCs have the ultimate responsibility for setting the goals, direction, and contents of the journal.

With the support from the PLOS Pathogens Team, the EiCs are responsible for setting editorial policies at the journal that will ensure timely, constructive, and fair review of papers. In addition, they are responsible for continually identify improvements and innovations that can be made to the journal processes and the editorial scope of the journal.

Research Article Editors

Section Editors
Section Editors serve as leaders of the journal and help guide both the content and development of the journal in their areas of expertise. Section Editors are expected to take an active role in:
• Contributing to the direction of the journal,
• Serving on subcommittees to evaluate specific types of submissions,
• Consulting on future Section and Associate Editor additions,
• Attending Editorial Summits,
• Interacting with fellow Section and Associate Editors,
• Providing feedback and advice on editorial policies and systems.

The PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board is separated into 10 sections by subject area:

Section and Associate Editors are organized into a specific section, however that does not prevent them from being invited to handle a manuscript submitted to a different section. Cross-communication and collaboration is encouraged between the sections.

1. DNA Viruses
2. Evolutionary Biology
3. Gram-negative Bacteria
4. Gram-positive Bacteria
5. HIV and Retroviruses
6. Mycology
7. Parasitology
8. Plant Pathogens
9. Prions
10. RNA Viruses

Research Articles are first assessed by the specific Section Editors associated with these subject areas, before being assigned to an Associate Editor if suitable for further consideration.

Associate Editors
PLOS Pathogens regularly uses a combination of formal Associate Editor board members and Guest Editors to edit papers. Associate Editors oversee the peer review process for the journal, including evaluation submissions, selecting reviewers and assessing their comments, and making editorial decisions.

Front Matter Editors
Front Matter Editors are responsible for editing submissions to the front section. There are three types of Front Matter Editor at PLOS Pathogens:

• Opinions Editors
• Pearls Editors
• Reviews Editors

Pearls Editors work in a cohort to solicit and edit content for the Pearls Section. They are led by a Senior Pearls Editor and are also separated in sections that reflect the main sections of the journal: Virology, Bacteriology, Parasitology, Mycology, Plant Pathogens, and Prions.

Appendix VI
The role of one of these editors is similar to that of an Associate Editor. The Editors-in-Chief or Senior Pearls Editor act as Section Editors and sign off on final decisions from the Front Matter Editor. The editor is then expected to make an initial decision, invite the required number of reviewers, and submit decisions for approval by the acting Section Editor.

A complete list of members of the PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board can be found on the journal site.
APPENDIX VII. PLOS PROFILE

Getting Started
A PLOS profile will be set up for you when you join the Editorial Board, unless you already have one under the same email address we have on file. Your login information will be the same for the Editorial Board Knowledge Base, and will be included in your Welcome email along with information on how to select a password.

Once you have a profile and have selected a password, sign in and out of your account by clicking the “sign in/out” link at the top right of any of the journal pages. To update your profile and adjust your preferences, click the Profile at the top right of any journal page or the following link:

https://community.plos.org/account/edit-profile

A PLOS profile allows users to access the different PLOS websites using the same login information. Currently, editors can use their profiles to login to the password protected portions of the journal websites (http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/ for example) and the editor Knowledge Base websites. In the future, we will be expanding the PLOS profile system to include more of the tools we use every day.

Commenting
Associate Editors are encouraged to participate in post-publication discussion by commenting on articles they handled, as well as other articles published in their field.

To submit a comment, click the “Post a new comment” link on the “Comments” tab. If you are not signed in to your PLOS Profile, you will be asked to sign in before proceeding.

Email Alerts
To set up alerts for newly published content, click the Profile link at the top right of any of the journal pages and then select Alerts & Notifications. Updates about new content published in all of the PLOS journals may be received weekly or monthly.

It is also possible to conduct an advanced search within any of the journals and save the query to receive alerts for this specific search. Perform an advanced search by clicking the advanced search link below the search bar on any of the journal pages or at the following link:

http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/search

When the search is completed, click the Search Alert button on the right side of the screen to set up either a weekly or monthly email alert for new articles that meet the search criteria. These search results are also available as an RSS feed by clicking the RSS button next to the Search Alert button. You can manage all existing search alerts by clicking Alerts & Notifications on the Profile page.
APPENDIX VIII. THE PLOS JOURNAL FAMILY

The PLOS Journals

PLOS publishes a suite of influential journals from all areas of science and medicine. Each journal has unique publication criteria and editorial models. In addition to PLOS Pathogens, we publish two flagship journals, PLOS Medicine and PLOS Biology, which aim to publish high impact research in their respective fields; three further “community journals”: PLOS Computational Biology, PLOS Genetics and PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases; and PLOS ONE. The table below highlights the differences between these journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas covered</th>
<th>ONE</th>
<th>Community journals</th>
<th>Medicine, Biology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial selection considers impact?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish articles other than primary research?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional staff editors</td>
<td>Provide assistance to Associate Editors when needed</td>
<td>None; Publication staff support volunteer Editors</td>
<td>Collaborate with volunteer Editors to manage review process and make decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transferring Submissions between Journals

Authors may submit work to any PLOS journal, and yet there may be another PLOS journal for which it is more appropriate. For instance, work that is out of the scope of PLOS Medicine may be appropriate for PLOS Pathogens. Another example might be work that is not considered a significant advance by PLOS Pathogens but could be well-suited for PLOS ONE. In such instances, editors can recommend that the authors transfer the work to one of the other PLOS journals. Note, however, that some article types differ between journals and therefore cannot be transferred. In particular, no type of article other than primary research can be considered at PLOS ONE.

If the authors agree to transfer their submission between PLOS journals, they may move forward with a direct transfer, in which the manuscript, along with any reviewer or editor comments, is transferred to the receiving journal for consideration. Note that direct transfers should only be encouraged if the manuscript is technically sound and is being rejected by the original journal because it is out of the journal’s scope or does not have high enough perceived impact.

Accepting into PLOS ONE vs. Suggesting a Transfer

The aim of the Accept into ONE decisions process is to expedite the publication of rigorous research without the need for additional cycles of review. As such, only manuscripts that have already undergone peer review and describe a study reported to the highest standards are eligible for acceptance into ONE.

Associate Editors may still recommend manuscripts for transfer to PLOS ONE if they are rejected before peer review, but the manuscript’s acceptance into ONE will take place at the discretion of the journal.

For more information on how to use this new process, see the Accept to PLOS ONE Manual on the Knowledge Base.
Alternatively, the authors may be advised to first revise their submission based on reviewer and editor feedback before resubmitting to another PLOS journal. They may then submit the revised version to the other journal, along with a response to reviewers, as they would for a typical revision. This revised manuscript will then be reconsidered at the new journal.

The PLOS Business Model
PLOS is a not-for-profit Open Access publisher. Among other things, this descriptor means that all of our content is free to readers. We never charge subscription fees to read our papers. When a manuscript is accepted for publication, authors must pay a publication fee. There is no submission fee. Further information regarding the publication fees for all journals can be found here: https://www.plos.org/publication-fees.

Global Pricing Initiative
PLOS is committed to the widest possible global participation in Open Access publishing. To this end, authors’ research that is funded primarily (50% or more of the work contained within the article) by an institution or organization from eligible low- and middle-income countries will receive partial (group 2 countries) or full (group 1 countries) fee funding paid by the PLOS Global Participation Initiative (GPI).

PLOS Publication Fee Assistance
PLOS believes that lack of funds should not be a barrier to Open Access publication. The Publication Fee Assistance (PFA) program is intended for authors who are unable to pay all or part of their publication fees and can demonstrate financial need. Authors must apply for Publication Fee Assistance at time of submission through the manuscript system. Further information about the PLOS Publication Fee Assistance Program can be found here: https://www.plos.org/fee-assistance.

Editorial Independence
All editorial decisions are made completely independently of any financial considerations. None of the authors’ financial information is shared with any editor before, during, or after the peer review process.

Open Access
PLOS applies the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license to works we publish. This license was developed to facilitate Open Access – namely, free immediate access to, and unrestricted reuse of, original works of all types. Under this license, the authors retain ownership of the copyright for their content but agree to make articles legally available for reuse, without permission or fees, for virtually any purpose. Anyone may copy, distribute or reuse these articles, as long as the author and original source are properly cited. As such, we cannot publish any previously copyrighted materials, with few exceptions.

Open Access encompasses a number of issues, including author rights, reader rights, and machine readability. Learn more about the spectrum of Open Access with the “HowOpenIsIt?” pamphlet.

Innovations in Publishing
PLOS aims to develop innovations in scholarly publishing that will improve scientific communication. These efforts are ongoing; a subset of our projects are discussed below.
Post-Publication Interactions

Publishing the article is the beginning of an ongoing conversation about the work. We aim to capture some of that activity through article-level metrics – data about the number of times the article was viewed, downloaded, bookmarked, and shared in various ways – and public comments.

Article-level metrics, or ALMs, offer a mechanism to determine the real significance of an individual article instead of relying on coarser measures like in which journal it was published. Our “Search” feature allows users to filter their results based on certain ALMs. We are constantly working to improve our ALMs by adding new types of usage to track and providing benchmarking measurements that allow users to compare ALMs across different articles more accurately.

Users may post comments on any of our published articles. With this feature, we aim to give readers from around the world a way to communicate about work in their fields and so foster a productive, collaborative space for critical discussion of the literature. Users may post questions for the authors, to which the authors frequently respond, or general comments or feedback about the work. We hope that this public discussion forum about published work will help make scientific communication more effective and efficient.

Just as the static PDF is no longer sufficient to best represent scientific research outcomes that extend beyond the article, the static reference list at the end of a scholarly article is no longer sufficient to discover the depth of information contained within the network of those references. Rich citations, an advanced form of scholarly reference, carry detailed information about the citing paper, the cited object and the relationship between the two. This improved data format for bibliographic references and the ability to connect references among articles as structured metadata enables enhanced content, machine readability and relational discovery. The PLOS overlay for its articles using rich citation data in turn makes the list of references a research tool in itself. The rich citations open source API is available for interested developers

PLOS Currents

PLOS Currents is our rapid micropublication platform that aims to minimize the delay between the generation and publication of new research. Authors submit small pieces of work that may be valuable for rapid sharing with the research community, including research in progress, single figures or experiments, protocols, datasets, and negative results. Submissions are peer-reviewed within days of submission and published immediately upon acceptance.

PLOS Currents currently covers six areas:

- **Disasters** (any content relevant to disasters, natural or manmade, local, regional or global)
- **Outbreaks** (all aspects of infectious disease outbreaks with impact or potential impact on human health, including respiratory pathogens and foodborne and travel-related outbreaks)
- **Huntington Disease**
- **Muscular Dystrophy**
- **Tree of Life** (phylogenetic research that informs our understanding of organismal evolution)
- **Evidence on Genomic Tests**
APPENDIX IX: FURTHER READING

**PLOS Pathogens:** [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/)

**Journal Information:** [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/journal-information](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/journal-information)

**Open Access License:** [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/content-license](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/content-license)

**HowOpenIsIt?** [https://www.plos.org/how-open-is-it](https://www.plos.org/how-open-is-it)


**Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE):** [http://publicationethics.org/](http://publicationethics.org/)

**PLOS Pathogens Editorial Board:** [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/editorial-board](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/editorial-board)

**Author Guidelines:** [http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/submission-guidelines](http://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/s/submission-guidelines)

**Article-Level Metrics Information:** [https://www.plos.org/article-level-metrics](https://www.plos.org/article-level-metrics)

**Speaking of Medicine:** [http://blogs.plos.org/speakingofmedicine/](http://blogs.plos.org/speakingofmedicine/)