frontiers FOR YOUNG MINDS

Science Mentor Guidelines

A How-To Guide

Welcome to the Frontiers for Young Minds community of Science Mentors! In these guidelines, you will learn in 15 minutes about Frontiers for Young Minds and your role in the journal. Science Mentors introduce their Young Reviewers to the concept of peer review, assist them in navigating through a cutting-edge science manuscript, and empower them as young experts to provide feedback to authors about communicating science to their peers. You will introduce them to the daily life of a scientist (not all scientists look like Albert Einstein).

You are always welcome to contact our Editorial Office at kids@frontiersin.org – we are here to provide you with all the technical support needed to make this journal a success.

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1. ABOUT FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS

Frontiers for Young Minds is an open access, non-profit scientific journal for which young people are both the target audience and critical participants in the review process. We help connect 8-15 year old's with active scientists to provide feedback on manuscripts shaped for a younger audience.

1.1 HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. **The Editorial Office and our Editorial Board** identify recent discoveries that are of potential interest for a younger audience. These can be articles published by Frontiers or other academic publishers.

2. **The scientists behind the original research** are invited to write an article that puts the work in a broader context and is targeted to a younger audience. This manuscript is then submitted – free of charge - to Frontiers for Young Minds as a New Discovery. Scientists also have the option of providing an overview article of a basic or fundamental concept in their discipline – these are called Core Concepts.

3. **The Specialty Chief Editors** evaluate whether the manuscript fits within their section in the current form or needs some revisions.

4. **An Associate Editor** manages the peer review process after an initial manuscript evaluation by our Chief Editors. The Associate Editor invites a Science Mentor to review the manuscript together with one of our Young Minds or a classroom of Young Minds. Together they suggest relevant revisions to the authors, who will revise the manuscript.

5. **Once the review process is completed**, the manuscript is validated by the Associate Editor and the Editorial Office performs the last editorial checks. The manuscript is then typeset for online and printable versions.

6. **The finished article** is published and made freely available on our website alongside the Young Minds' names. We protect the identities of our Young Reviewers and only publish their first names and a short self-written biography.

1.2 FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS EDITORIAL BOARDS

The **Science Mentors** guide the Young Reviewers through the review process, serving as a direct connection to the scientific community. They can recommend rejection of a manuscript before the review event. They are also responsible for maintaining contact with their Young Reviewers so that they know if they can review manuscripts as they are submitted. If their Young Minds pass the maximum age of 15 year old, they should engage other Young Reviewers.

2. YOUR ROLE AS SCIENCE MENTOR

2.1 ROLE WITHIN THE JOURNAL

The success of the journal depends on the active involvement of our Science Mentors - not only on the day of the review, but also in their planning to make sure that the young people involved get the most out of the experience. While the Young Reviewers are the primary sources of feedback for the manuscript itself, the Science Mentor should help the Young Reviewers understand the scientific process, peer review, and how to approach an article with a critical eye for feedback. The Science Mentor should help the Young Reviewers understand the scientific process, peer review, and how to approach an article with a critical eye for feedback.

As Science Mentor, you will be responsible for the following:

- Completing your Loop profile, which will provide you with access to the Frontiers platform and serve as a reference for both the Associate Editors and the Young Minds. Please always include a short biography, a picture, and your publication history.
- Identifying Young Reviewer(s): individuals or groups of children between 8-15 years old. Think about classrooms, after-school programs, collaborating with a museum, etc.
- Filling in the regular survey sent by the Editorial Office to indicate your and your Young Reviewers availability and interests.
- Coordinate, prepare, execute, and follow up on the review event.
- Filling in the review report on the Frontiers platform (described more in depth below) with the Young Reviewers' feedback.
- Sending the Young Reviewer(s) biography materials and avatar to the Editorial Office (kids@frontiersin.org) to be included on the published article (see 2.6 'Obtaining Materials for the review event').
- Maintaining the dialogue with the authors on the Frontiers review platform to ensure that the manuscript revisions meet the needs and concerns of the Young Minds.

**** As part of the integration of Frontiers for Young Minds into the Frontiers review platform, Science Mentors are still referred to as "Reviewers" or "Review Editors" within the forum (a term from Frontiers' academic titles). So please note that although your role within the journal is that of a Science Mentor, within the review platform you will have to respond to the role of 'Review Editor'.**

If you have any questions, please contact kids@frontiersin.org **

2.2 CREATING A LOOP PROFILE

Please take a minute to register for Loop via the Frontiers website and complete your biography, including a picture, short biography, and confirming your publications. You can do this at www.frontiersin.org. This will give you access to our review forum, and also allows the Young Minds to see who the scientists behind the journal are!
The publications you enter will also serve as an important reference for the Chief Editor regarding the composition of their board of mentors.

2.3 IDENTIFYING YOUNG REVIEWERS

There are a number of options for working with Young Reviewers – with most mentors collaborating with classrooms, museums, student groups, or after-school programs. This allows the students to work together and have an active discussion during the review, but also gives the mentor the opportunity to introduce themselves and their experiences as a scientist to the whole group. Whatever the group, one of the keys to ensuring an engaged and well-managed review is to work with the supervising educators in advance.

If your department or University already has an active outreach program, it is likely that they already have a working relationship with one of the schools in your area. It is usually best to check with them first and take advantage of any experience they have in setting up a classroom event with a local educator or program. You may also reach out to a school yourself and try to identify an educator or program who would be excited about having this kind of activity.

One-on-one reviews are less common and typically require significant coordination with interested kid reviewers who contact us directly. We are working towards a more scalable approach for such reviews in the future.

**** Please make sure to fill in the surveys sent by the Editorial Office to indicate your and your Young Minds availability and interests during a certain period. Do note that the timeline varies due to the number of submitted manuscripts available for review. ****

2.4 PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW EVENT

When you receive a manuscript, please evaluate its suitability for being reviewed by your Young Reviewers, as you have the option to recommend rejection / ask revisions before the review event. While your primary responsibility occurs on the day of the review event, the preparation and coordination before and after can also have a significant effect on the experiences of the Young Reviewers involved.

SCHEDULING THE EVENT

The review event should ideally take place within 30 days of receiving the manuscript. If you cannot perform the review event within this time frame, please inform the Associate Editor handling the manuscript, who may choose to find another Science Mentor to assist in the review of the manuscript.

If you will be able to perform the review event within 30 days, please inform Editorial Office (kids@frontiersin.org) when the review event will take place at. This will allow us to follow up with you accordingly regarding your review event.

COLLABORATE WITH THE EDUCATOR

Whether for a classroom, museum, or after-school program, the educator who regularly works with the students is an invaluable resource. As much as possible, determine the content that the class or program will be covering leading up to the review event. It may also be useful to meet with the educator after you have both read the manuscript. The educator may be able to help you pinpoint areas of the manuscript that may be particularly difficult for the students, and help you brainstorm ways of clarifying these sections for them.

Determine whether it would be possible to either observe or interact with the group ahead of time. Learn as much as you can about the ages, learning limitations, classroom resources, and known motivators for the Young Reviewers you will be working with. Always respect the time – as much or as little as it may be – that the educator may have available for the event and think about ways to make the most out of the experience given those limitations. One of the key factors for a productive review event is ensuring that as many of the Young Reviewers as possible have read the manuscript before the day of the event.

GET TO KNOW YOUR YOUNG REVIEWERS

Depending on the limitations of the group you will be working with, it may or may not be possible to meet with the students in advance (either in person or virtually). At minimum, try to get to know the needs and interests of the group from the educator. Some suggestions could include:

- Reading level
- Size of group
- Career ambitions
- Socio-economic background
- Recently learned science content
- Current events or pop culture of particular interest to the group
- Motivation for participation (mandatory, elective, etc)
- Comfort level with working in groups, speaking in front of class
- Writing level
- Things they may have in common with you

If it will not be possible to learn about the group in advance, consider planning a small activity that will help you get to know them (as time allows).

**** Note that a long distance review is possible, for example via Skype. However, in these cases please make an extra effort to do a 'pre-visit' to the Young Reviewer(s) and coordinate with the teacher or educator, in order to prevent appearing too distant. Despite the potential constraints of a long distance Science Mentor, we have found this is indeed a good way to get Science Mentors into classrooms that might be otherwise more isolated (e.g. rural classrooms). ****

GET TO KNOW YOUR MANUSCRIPT

As the Science Mentor, you will be the primary resource for both the educator and Young Reviewers trying to understand and provide feedback on the manuscript. The manuscript will likely fall outside of your direct area of expertise, and some basic background research beforehand may help in fielding questions and guiding discussions.

In particular there may be types of figures that the Young Reviewers have never encountered before, and you may need to explain how to read them and why researchers use figures to convey information about their research. If you feel that a particular figure is too complicated or advanced for the target audience, be sure to get the feedback from the Young Reviewers directly to provide to the authors.

There are also likely to be words that are unfamiliar for the Young Reviewers. Depending on the time available to the educator, they may have already been able to help the students with this, but you are likely to also be answering questions of this nature. You should take into consideration the feedback of the Young Minds, as well as of the educator. If the vocabulary is too complex, provide this feedback to the authors, in order to help ensure that the published manuscript will be at the correct level. The input from the Young Reviewers regarding the vocabulary and complexity relative to their own age group (better for younger, better for older, just right) is a valuable resource for the journal to provide clarification for readers in the future.

FIND PIECES TO MOTIVATE INTERACTION AND DISCUSSION

Based on what you learn about your Young Reviewers as well as the manuscript, look for opportunities to motivate the group to get excited and involved with the material. Depending on the group of Young Reviewers and the educator, the best approach for this may vary significantly. Tools that motivate the Young Reviewers to fully read and engage with the manuscript BEFORE the day of the review event are a great advantage. Consider some options below, and collaborate with the educator on ideas whenever possible:

Before event (to bring with them)

- Ask Young Reviewers to name two things in the manuscript that they already knew and two things that they learned by reading it
- You provide 2-3 questions about the figures in the manuscript to be answered in advance, or ask the students to bring questions that they have about the figures
- Ask Young Reviewers to each provide a 1-2 sentence summary of the main finding or idea of the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to bring 1-2 questions that they would want to ask the researcher who wrote the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to bring 1-2 suggestions about what would have made the manuscript easier to understand/ more exciting for them personally
- Ask each Young Reviewer to identify one point they found the most interesting and one they found the most confusing in the way it was communicated

During event

- Ask Young Reviewers to propose questions that they would want to ask another student to determine if that other student understood the main idea of the manuscript

- Young Reviewers can work in small groups to propose another research question they would like to have answered based on what they learned from this manuscript
- Young Reviewers in small groups can focus on different aspects/sections of the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to suggest new phrasings for particularly confusing sentences
- Have Young Reviewers volunteer to be the scribe for each question from the questionnaire and summarize final feedback from their group
- Have Young Reviewers propose and then vote on the top 3 questions they would like to ask authors

GET TO KNOW THE BASICS ABOUT CLASSROOM/SCIENCE OUTREACH

Communicating science to younger audiences and getting groups excited to participate in outreach activities takes practice and preparation. No matter your level of experience, there are materials that can help you to prepare. Consider the resources below:

- This article, published in the journal BioScience, is a true academic's guide to outreach, including figures and a comprehensive list of references. The article covers topics including motivations for outreach, inquiry-based learning, and tips for classroom interactions. http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/65/3/313

- The American Astronomical Society has put together an enormous list of resources for classroom outreach. Particularly helpful here might be the ideas of places to find Young Minds. https://aas.org/outreach/moose-menu-outreach-opportunities-science-education#iia

- The American Society for Microbiology has put together a list of links which provide tips for interacting in a classroom environment. https://www.asm.org/index.php/in-the-classroom

- The National Academy of Sciences has put together a list of things to consider when entering a classroom, including tips on presenting and a breakdown of what different age groups are ready to take on in classroom activities. This is a quick read, and may be a good place to start if you have limited time before your first review event. http://www.nationalacademies.org/rise/roles1a.htm

2.5 YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR YOUNG REVIEWERS

The content in this section is meant to provide an introduction to your role and relationship with the Young Reviewers. The intent is not to have all of this content included at once as a formal presentation, but to be included and integrated throughout as best fits the time that you have with the group. Remember that new concepts will be better understood if they are repeated or tied to specific experiences.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

When you introduce yourself to the Young Reviewers, you are also providing a direct connection to the world of research. Consider the following aspects as options when preparing your introduction:

- Your name and where you are from

- What kind of scientist you are/type of research you do (in very plain terms)
- What made you want to do research? What experience/person inspired you the most?
- What do you have in common with your Young Reviewers?
- Was there a time when you did not think you would like science, but changed your mind?
- What you plan to do with them during the review event?

INTRODUCING PEER REVIEW

Most people outside of the research community are not familiar with the ideas of scientific publishing or peer review. Science curriculum or outreach activities often end at the moment of discovery or experimental design. Very little is ever conveyed about the role or importance of being able to communicate scientific findings in a clear, accurate, and interesting way.

- Why is it important for a scientist to be a good communicator?
- Why do scientists write down details about their work during the research?
- Why do scientists write down details about their work after the research?
- Why is it important for other experts to read the work of other researchers and provide feedback BEFORE something is published (i.e. why peer review)?
- What is a scientist looking for when they read someone else's work? (Thinking of potential questions, not just trying to memorize the content)
- How are the Young Reviewers in the group the experts needed for this manuscript, and why is their honest feedback so important?

**** This is a chance to get the Young Reviewers to understand that they are the experts for the target audience of these articles, and to encourage them to read about cutting-edge science with an attitude for asking questions rather than memorization. ****

EMPOWERING YOUNG REVIEWERS TO TAKE THE LEAD

Remember that one of your key goals is to empower the Young Minds themselves to take a lead on the feedback that is provided. You will have a chance to compile your thoughts and input as well for the authors and Editor, but as much of the actual feedback (including quotes) from the Young Minds should be included in the review questionnaire and comments as possible. The questions on the review questionnaire are meant to serve as a starting point, to ensure that the authors have the input necessary to improve their manuscripts. However it is important to remain flexible to guiding the conversation based on the response and interests of the Young Reviewers.

Depending on age group, you can even ask for student volunteers to keep notes on the board for parts of discussion, or write up group response to particular questions. You can download the Review questionnaire in the "Editors and Mentors" tab under the heading "Participate" on the Frontiers for Young Minds website (see section 2.6 below).

2.6 OBTAINING MATERIALS FOR THE REVIEW EVENT

You can find all the materials you need for the review event on our website. Navigate to https://kids.frontiersin.org/ and log into your Loop account (1). Click on the "Participate" icon on the top of the page (2), and then click on "Editors & Mentors". If you are logged into your Loop account, you will find all the materials you need under the heading "Participate > Mentors".

Here you will find:

- The review questionnaire which will help guide you through the review event. You will need to upload the responses of your Young Reviewers to this questionnaire directly into the review forum.
- The Young Reviewer profile forms (one for individual reviewers, and one for classrooms), which should be sent to kids@frontiersin.org along with a corresponding avatar.
- Guidelines for a classroom review which can be shared with the educator.
- A short document explaining to the Young Reviewers what their role is.

3. THE FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS REVIEW PROCESS

3.1 SUBMISSION AND INITIAL EVALUATION

Following manuscript submission, both the Editorial Office and the Specialty Chief Editors perform preliminary content checks of the manuscript to ensure its content is suitable for a young audience. They may decide to either send the manuscript out for review, ask revisions of the authors, or recommend immediate rejection.
When sent out for review, an Associate Editor will be invited to act as handling editor for the manuscript. This Associate Editor should also perform an initial content check before inviting a Science Mentor – Young Mind(s) pair to perform the review. The Editorial Office provides the Associate Editors with available Science Mentor – Young Mind(s) pairs. While the Associate Editor in principle leaves the review process to the Science Mentor, they are able to provide the authors with their direct comments as well in the review forum.

While the Editorial Office, Specialty Chief Editors, and Associate Editor perform initial checks of the manuscript, please perform an initial check yourself as well. These checks are put in place to identify manuscripts that may need to be rejected as early as possible in the review process. This is out of consideration for the Young Reviewers who would work on a manuscript, but then possibly not have the chance to appear on a published article for their work. If you believe that there is a problem that would prevent the publication of a manuscript, please contact the Associate Editor and Editorial Office directly before moving forward with the review.

3.2 ASSIGNMENT OF A SCIENCE MENTOR- YOUNG REVIEWER PAIR

The Associate Editor will invite a Science Mentor via the Frontiers platform and you will receive an email notifying you of this invitation. You may accept or decline this invitation by clicking on the links in this email. You will need to answer some basic questions before you can accept the assignment. Please note that this questionnaire has not been modified for *Frontiers for Young Minds* and is the questionnaire used for all Frontiers journals. Therefore please disregard the question on the potential conflict of interest (as this is not an issue for Frontiers for Young Minds) and complete it as if you have no conflict of interest (for example, a shared affiliation with the authors). It is also, not essential that the manuscript falls exactly within your area of expertise, so please click 'yes' to that question. Please note that for Frontiers for Young Minds, while you should have a basic understanding of the content, you do not need to be more than basically specialized in the area of the manuscript.

** Note: As part of the integration of *Frontiers for Young Minds* into the Frontiers review platform, Science Mentors are still referred to as "Reviewers" or "Review Editors" within the forum. Please note that while email messages will differentiate between you as the Science Mentor and the Young Reviewers, within the review platform your role will be referred to as Review Editor. If you have any questions, please contact kids@frontiersin.org **

3.3 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PHASE

** Note: What is called the independent review phase in the online platform is the "review event" that you will be performing with your Young Mind(s). **

There is a standard review questionnaire which should be followed. However please feel free to modify the format of the review, and work with teachers and parents to make sure that the review is as engaging as possible for the students.

ACCESSING REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

You can access your review assignments via two routes:
If you are on your Loop homepage, you can access your review assignments on the right hand side by selecting 'My Review Assignments' (1).
If you are on any other Frontiers site, you can access your review assignment when clicking 'My Frontiers' (2).

The image below shows the review forum. On the right hand side of the review forum, you will find options to:

(1) Download the latest version of the manuscript;
(2) Access all related files;
(3) Withdraw from the process, should you not have time to continue the review, should there be a conflict of interest, or if you find any objective error in the manuscript and would like to recommend it for rejection to the handling Associate Editor.

Please contact kids@frontiersin.org if you feel that it will become necessary to withdraw from the review or recommend the manuscript for rejection.

The review event should ideally take place within 30 days of receiving the manuscript. If you cannot perform the review event within this time frame, please inform the Associate Editor handling the manuscript, who may choose to find another Science Mentor to assist in the review of the manuscript.
If you will be able to perform the review event within 30 days, please inform the Editorial Office (kids@frontiersin.org) when the review event will take place. This will allow us to follow up with you accordingly regarding your review event.

Once the Young Reviewer feedback and your comments have been compiled into the Review Questionnaire, visit the review forum and fill out the relevant boxes (see screenshot below). You may select the "Save and Resume Later" (1) option at any stage, should you still be drafting. Once the review report is ready, simply press "Submit My Report" at the top (2), so that all comments may be sent to the handling Associate Editor, this button only becomes activated once you typed in a minimum of 50 words. If needed, you can still make changes to your report after it has been submitted up until the interactive review forum has been activated by the handling editor.

History | Me (Pending)

Reviewer 1: [illegible]
Independent review report expected by: [illegible]

My independent review report

Dear reviewer,

Please fill in each field of the independent review questionnaire below. The questions provided should be used as guidelines and are not exhaustive. Your review report will only be submitted to the Associate Editor and Authors when clicking on Submit my report. The editor and authors welcome your input, any questions, and comments on the manuscript.

2 Submit my report OR Save and resume later 1

EVALUATION

Q 1 As the mentor for this manuscript, you will be helping a young reviewer (or group of reviewers) to go through the article and provide their feedback.

The following questionnaire is meant to assist in two ways: to encourage the reviewer(s) to read the article with a critical eye and to guide them in providing feedback that will help the authors make the article easier for other young readers to understand.

As much as possible, encourage the kids to provide this kind of feedback in their own words. For groups, try to get a basic consensus on the feedback they would like to give or pick out two points to highlight if there are two distinct groups of opinions. The final question provides you as the mentor the chance to provide additional details and feedback on the process itself to the Associate Editor.

Article Type Description: Core Concept articles explain fundamental ideas from a given field and synthesize them in language that can be understood by kids (ages 8-15). Each article should have a clear scope and not attempt to address an entire discipline. The article should be primarily self-contained, explaining major terms within the text and clearly identifying areas where people could be interested to find out more.

(a) Question for Young Reviewer: What is this article about? What are the authors trying to explain (to you)?

Q 2 (b) Question for Young Reviewer: Why is this information important to understand?

The Associate Editor is automatically notified as soon as you submit the review report. The Associate Editor is then responsible for activating the next phase of the review, i.e. the interactive review forum stage. Even if the comments are unfavorable to the authors, the interactive review forum must be activated and the authors allowed the opportunity of rebuttal; this is a fundamental Frontiers principle.

**** After the review event has taken place, please make sure that you send the Reviewer profile form, and the Reviewer avatar to the Editorial Office at kids@frontiersin.org ****

3.4 THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW FORUM

Once the interactive review froum process is activated, authors are immediately notified to enter the Frontiers review forum, where they are able to view the review comments, and have up to 25 days to prepare responses and upload a revised manuscript resubmission. Authors may reply to the Young Reviewers through real-time comments in the discussion forum. As the Science Mentor, you are responsible for making sure that all of the concerns raised by the Young Reviewers have been addressed by the authors. The authors will often address the Young Minds questions directly, and we encourage you to share these responses with your Young Minds, if possible. The Associate Editor monitors the discussions occurring between authors and referees within this forum. He or she ensures not only that the participants' interaction unfolds in a timely manner, but that it is also constructive.

3.5 ARTICLE ACCEPTANCE

If you are satisfied with the authors' efforts at amending the manuscript, you will be asked to endorse publication. This automatically notifies the Associate Editor, who can accept the final version of the manuscript. The first name of the Young Reviewer(s), or name of the classroom, appears on the final manuscript. Note that we protect the identities of our Young Reviewers and only publish their first names. Similarly, for the protection of our Young Reviewers, the Science Mentors are not acknowledged on the final publication, but rather acknowledged separately from their Young Minds, in a separate section on the website.

As the review forum that Frontiers for Young Minds uses is the general Frontiers wide review forum, you will have the option to withdraw from the review and even recommend rejection during the interactive review phase. However, at this late stage of the review process, having already involved Young Reviewers, we strongly ask you to not use these options at this stage and ensure that all concerns you might have are addressed at the beginning of the review process before reaching the Young Reviewers.

3.6 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As the review forum that Frontiers for Young Minds uses is the general Frontiers wide review forum, you will be asked to declare any potential Conflict of Interest when accepting a review invitation. Please note that the mentioned Conflict of Interests do not pose a problem when reviewing for Frontiers for Young Minds. The questionnaire should thus always be answered that you have no Conflict of Interest.

4. FOLLOWING UP

Following up with the Young Reviewers
It is not required that you follow up with the Young Reviewers or educator after the review event or publication, however you are welcome to do so. We especially encourage you to share any feedback that the authors may have provided directly to the Young Minds, as this is a unique opportunity for the Young Minds to interact with a scientist, and have their questions and concerns addressed directly. You may also wish to ask for feedback from the educator, as they may be able to provide constructive criticism, and tips for your next review.

Following up with Frontiers for Young Minds
Frontiers for Young Minds is constantly seeking to improve our process and the impact of the review process for those involved. If you would be willing to provide feedback about your experience or the process itself, please contact us at kids@frontiersin.org.