



Manual for Journal Editors

This Manual has been prepared to acquaint editors and associate editors of primary research journals published by the American Mathematical Society with their official duties and standard procedures to be followed when handling manuscripts.

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Websites of Interest

AMS Journals Home Page - <http://www.ams.org/journals/>

Author Resource Center - <http://www.ams.org/authors/>

Author Packages for Publishing with the AMS - <http://www.ams.org/tex/author-info.html>

Benefits of LaTeX - <http://www.ams.org/jourhtml/latexbenefits.html>

CENTRACK - <http://www.ams.org/centrack>

Frequently Asked Questions for AMS Authors - <http://www.ams.org/authors/author-faq.html>

Guidelines for Journal Editors, *To guide the decision making process* -

<http://www.ams.org/secretary/guidelines-jrl-editors.html>

TeX Resources Home Page - <http://www.ams.org/tex/>

Standard Procedures for Handling Manuscripts

A. Scientific Aspects

An editor is primarily responsible for accepting or rejecting manuscripts. In carrying out this responsibility, an editor is encouraged to adopt a critical attitude, accepting only those papers that contain new research results and good exposition, are clearly written, and will be of interest to an appreciable number of readers. Although referees make the recommendations for acceptance or rejection of papers, the final decisions rest with the editor. Furthermore, as the one who chooses the referees, the editor holds the final responsibility for the quality of accepted papers. By acting as a liaison between the authors and the Society, the editor assists the Society in maintaining cordial relations with the authors. See the “Guidelines for Journal Editors, *To guide the decision making process*” (<http://www.ams.org/secretary/guidelines-jrl-editors.html>), which were adopted at the January 2005 meeting of the Council of the American Mathematical Society.

1. **Criteria for Recommending Publication.** Although each journal should have its own statement of editorial policy for acceptance of papers, the set of criteria listed below may be taken as a standard for such statements.
 - a. Papers must be correct. While this is basically the author’s responsibility, the referee certainly must be reasonably convinced of the accuracy of the paper.
 - b. Papers must be new in a nontrivial sense; e.g., a collection of new definitions and deductions therefrom is not publishable unless the author shows that (or unless it is clear that) it simplifies or solves some existing problems of reasonable importance. Similarly, a new theorem with an old proof may not be publishable. The editorial committee should collectively strive to seek out papers that will enable the journal to represent contemporary mathematical research significantly in its many dynamic facets. There should be a consensus of the committee as to the standards of excellence which will ensure this objective, and the quality of a paper should be judged on this basis.
 - c. Papers must be of interest to an appreciable number of readers, not just the author’s students and a few colleagues.
 - d. Papers must be written clearly; at least the referee should be able to understand them without undue difficulty. In a paper which is otherwise marginal, failure in this respect could be cause for rejection.
2. **Functions Performed by the Editor in Evaluating Manuscripts.** The three main functions performed by the editor in evaluating manuscripts are: **preliminary evaluation, selection of referees, and final evaluation.** The scientific aspects of these functions are described below. Upon receipt of a manuscript, the editor must first decide whether it has arrived at the appropriate editor’s desk. If the manuscript must be forwarded to another editor, the author should be notified of this action when receipt of the manuscript is acknowledged. Manuscripts can be reassigned through CENTRACK (see Section B, 2. Tracking Manuscripts in Peer Review).
 - a. **Preliminary evaluation.** The editor should scan the paper for content to determine whether it should be assigned to a referee. Occasionally, it will be immediately apparent that the results of a paper have already been published or that the paper itself is nonsense. In such cases, the editor may return the paper with a tactful letter explaining the reason for rejection.

Most papers, however, will be bona fide and will require refereeing. Editors should record the rejection in CENTRACK (see Section B, 2. Tracking Manuscripts in Peer Review).

- b. **Selection of a referee.** By experience, an editor acquires a list of conscientious referees as well as a list of individuals who have been unsatisfactory referees because they failed to read a paper, they kept it too long, or they rejected it without giving a reason. In fact, one of the most useful pieces of information an editor can give to a successor is a list of unsatisfactory referees along with a list of suggested referees.

A referee is asked to recommend acceptance, rejection, or revision of papers; the final decision rests with the editor. Each recommendation should be clear and well founded and should be based on a thorough reading of the paper. Since the referee's report will be transmitted (anonymously) to the author, reasons for a recommendation should be carefully stated without revealing the identity of the referee.

- **Refereeing time.** Each referee who agrees to review a manuscript will be asked to agree also to a target date for completion of a report. An editor should write to the referee near the target date for a report in order to ask for a new target date.
- **Referee's report.** A referee's report should be based on a thorough reading of the paper, and recommendations for rejection or revision should be clear and well founded. Because the referee must remain anonymous, the report should be submitted without revealing the identity of the referee. It can then be included in the editor's report to the author. In most cases, the referee's report will be sent to the author, although there are exceptions.

c. **Final evaluation.**

Acceptance. If the referee has recommend acceptance of a paper without comment or substantial criticism, the editor should communicate with the author regarding final preparation of the paper for publication. Editors should provide a copy of [Appendix A](#), "*Information for Authors of Accepted Papers for AMS Publications*" to accepted authors. This document includes key information for:

- Abstract Preparation
- Math Subject Classification
- Graphic Preparation
- Permissions
- Consent to Publish

It is important at this time to inform the Production Department in Providence of the acceptance of the paper through CENTRACK (see Section B, 4. Final Correspondence).

Rejection. If the referee has recommended that a paper be rejected and the editor agrees, the manuscript should be returned to the author with the referee's report. Occasionally, it may be necessary to rewrite a report to clarify the reasons for rejection or to make it less offensive. If the referee's reasons for rejection of a paper are unsatisfactory or appear to be biased in some way, the editor should seek a second opinion on the paper. It is important at this time to notify the Production Department in Providence of the rejection of the paper through CENTRACK.

Revision. If the referee has suggested that the paper be revised, the editor should make sure that the reasons are clear and the suggestions are reasonable. The report can then either be forwarded directly to the author or paraphrased to emphasize the principal suggestions for improvement.

B. Nonscientific Aspects

This section describes the procedural aspects of handling a manuscript after initial submission to the AMS.

- 1. Centralized Manuscript Submission.** Submission of articles to AMS journals is centralized in the Providence production office. Articles are submitted to the Providence office by the author in one of two formats: PDF file or paper. Electronic (PDF) files are submitted through a web-based interface at <http://www.ams.org/cgi-bin/peertrack/submission.pl>. Paper submissions are mailed to the Providence office. Manuscripts received in paper format are scanned by Providence staff to create PDF files which are entered into our database. Providence staff evaluates the submission for completeness, informs the author and editor of receipt, sends the article to the appropriate editor, and moves the manuscript into a web-based tracking tool for editors called CENTRACK (<http://www.ams.org/centrack>).
- 2. Tracking Manuscripts in Peer Review.** CENTRACK is the AMS-created tracking tool for AMS journal editors so they can access articles submitted for consideration electronically. Editors can also arrange for their support staff to gain access to CENTRACK by contacting centrack-help@ams.org.

CENTRACK allows editors to log in the various steps that take place during the refereeing process including maintaining the most recent PDF file of the manuscript, reassigning papers to another editor, and notifying the author and the AMS when a paper has been accepted. A demo version is available at <http://www.ams.org/msdemo/demo.html>. For help in using CENTRACK, go to http://www.ams.org/centrack_doc/editorinstructions.html.

Once a paper has been accepted, the editor should record this information in CENTRACK and upload the accepted version of the PDF file. Editors may elect to send hard copy of the accepted paper to the Providence office. If sending hard copy, the editor must include the following information with the paper:

- Name of the journal
- Accepting editor
- Date of original submission
- Date of acceptance
- Date(s) of revised submission(s)

Authors should be instructed by the editor to send the final version of the electronic manuscript to the Providence office immediately after acceptance. “*Where to Send Files for Papers Accepted for AMS Publication*” (<http://www.ams.org/jourhtml/submitms.html>) contains detailed information on accepted article submission.

- 3. Recording the Refereeing Process.** CENTRACK should be used to track manuscripts during peer review including when the paper is with a referee. CENTRACK makes it easy to follow up on outstanding manuscripts.

4. Final Correspondence. It is the responsibility of the editor to notify authors of acceptance or rejection of a paper and to record this information in CENTRACK. When the referee's report is received, record the date of receipt in CENTRACK.

- a. Editors must send the final accepted version of the paper to the Providence office. Editors can use CENTRACK to upload the final accepted version of the paper or send it to the Providence office. When using regular mail, include the name of the journal and "Accepted Manuscript" on the envelope. For example:

Proceedings–Accepted Manuscript
Electronic Prepress Department
American Mathematical Society
201 Charles Street
Providence, RI 02904-2294 USA

Following this guideline will direct the manuscript to the proper queue for expeditious processing.

- b. If the referee has recommended revision of the paper, the referee's report or a paraphrase of it should be sent to the author (see Section A, 2.c. Final evaluation) and the editor should keep a copy of it. Editors should remember to record the received/revised dates in CENTRACK. If the manuscript at this point still does not contain an abstract, subject classification numbers, or proper graphics, remind the author of this fact, and send the appropriate instructions.
- c. If the referee has recommended rejection, send the referee's report (anonymously) to the author along with the manuscript (see Section A, 2.c. Final evaluation.)

5. Miscellaneous. Authors or keyboarders who are preparing articles for submission to the AMS, including electronic and nonelectronic manuscripts, may retrieve an author package from the AMS website through the URL <http://www.ams.org/tex/author-info.html> or via FTP to ftp.ams.org (login as anonymous and enter username as password). The publication "*Mathematics into Type: Updated Edition*" (<http://www.ams.org/bookstore-getitem/item=MIT-2>) may be useful for answering general questions about publishing and has suggestions for authors submitting a manuscript. It is mainly concerned with composition and proofs. Such knowledge is useful to an author while writing a paper in order to provide a good manuscript. This publication may be ordered from the Society from the AMS Bookstore at <http://www.ams.org/bookstore>.

Appendix A Information for Authors of Accepted Papers for AMS Publications

AMS-LaTeX and AMS-TeX Author Packages

The AMS offers two TeX-related style file collections, AMS-LaTeX and AMS-TeX, that provide easy ways to code manuscripts containing mathematical expressions. The AMS has developed AMS-LaTeX and AMS-TeX author packages that include documentation and instructions, publication-specific style files, and examples. To download an author package, go to <http://www.ams.org/journals/>, select the appropriate journal, and then choose “Author packages” in the “For authors” column.

Descriptive Title

Each article submitted for publication in an AMS journal must be accompanied by a descriptive title. Make your title as informative as possible. It must clearly identify both the general field of the paper and the particular branch of it under consideration. The title should not be more than 10 or 12 words, and fewer words are better. Avoid words that tell nothing and waste space, such as “concerning”, “a remark about”, “some contributions to the theory of”. Also avoid proper names unless mathematical usage associates them with the work. An example of a nondescriptive title: “Concerning some applications of a theorem of John Doe”. Note that titles may be used in information retrieval; therefore, every word counts.

Abstract

Papers for AMS journals must be accompanied by an abstract. Depending on the journal, the abstract will be printed right after the title in a different type size to separate it from the rest of the paper. Abstracts for the *Journal of the AMS* do not appear in print; they appear only in the online version. The main purpose of the abstract is to enable readers to take in the nature and results of the article quickly and to enable them to decide whether they wish to read further. *Zentralblatt* publishes authors’ abstracts instead of reviews, so the abstract may also appear there. Of course, the abstract will also aid in retrieving information about your paper.

Length. For *Proceedings*, an abstract should be at least one sentence and at most 150 words; for the *Journal of the AMS*, *Transactions* and *Memoirs*, at least one sentence and at most 300 words; for *Mathematics of Computation* and *Bulletin*, the abstract should be brief and reasonably self-contained. The length will depend primarily on the length of the paper itself, so that the upper limits placed on abstracts for *Proceedings*, *Journal of the AMS*, *Transactions*, and *Memoirs* are meant for long papers only. To some extent, the difficulty of summarizing the material also determines the length.

Content. State the object of the work, summarize the results, and give the principal conclusions as briefly as possible.

Style. Use full sentences. Avoid technicalities, since the abstract should be readable by anyone in the general field (analysis, algebra, etc.). Formulas are not desirable, but they may be included, if it seems best to do so. Do not cite bibliographic references, since the abstract must be able to stand alone. Similarly, do not refer by number to a theorem or formula in the body of the article. Incorporate the statements of theorems into complete sentences. “We prove that all hyperloops are quasiregular” is preferable to “Theorem. All hyperloops are quasiregular.”

Relation to introduction. Occasionally an abstract will make an introduction unnecessary. Usually, however, the abstract will be too brief, and the introduction should enlarge upon it, provide more background, and describe earlier work.

The following abstract is from D. O. Banks and G. J. Kurowski, *Computation of eigenvalues of singular Sturm-Liouville systems*, *Math. of Comp.* **22** (1968), 304–310.

Abstract. In recent papers, P. B. Bailey and M. Godart have used the Prufer transformation to calculate the eigenvalues of nonsingular and some singular Sturm-Liouville boundary value problems. In the present paper, the authors establish the existence of a general class of singular problem which may be solved in a straightforward manner using the Prufer transformation. Some examples of the method are given. Finally, the class of problems to which the method is applicable is extended by introducing a modified transformation.

2000 Mathematics Subject Classification

Each article submitted for publication in an AMS journal must be accompanied by 2000 Mathematics Subject Classification numbers. These numbers classify the paper by field. They are used for information retrieval; by assigning these numbers properly, you make sure that people interested in your work will see it. Depending on the journal, the numbers will be printed in a footnote on the first page of your article and will appear on the abstract page online for all AMS journals. See the 2000 Mathematics Subject Classification (<http://www.ams.org/msc>) or the annual subject index of *Mathematical Reviews*, published with the December issue starting in 1999. You should give numbers designating secondary as well as primary subject fields of your paper if they are applicable. Keep in mind that several primary (and secondary) numbers probably should be assigned, but try not to choose more than ten primary or secondary numbers.

Key Words and Phrases

For the sake of nonspecialists (such as librarians), as well as to aid in future information retrieval, a list of key words and phrases is very helpful. The list should be generous; however, it should not include words that would appear in almost any paper in the general field. Thus “cohomology group” could be appropriate for a paper in Lie algebras but not for a paper in algebraic topology.

Style. List phrases in the natural groupings in which they occur in the paper (e.g., differential form, locally compact groups, deformations of algebras). Proper adjectives are especially useful in pinpointing the subject matter (e.g., Sobolev space). Reduce compounds to their components so that “convergence in mean or measure” becomes “convergence in mean, convergence in measure”. The phrases and words should be taken from the body of the paper, the title, and the abstract. Avoid long phrases. In general, an item should have four words or less. Use as many items as you need to distinguish the field of the paper clearly and specifically. An example follows:

Key words and phrases. Analytically unramified ring, semilocal ring, Dedekind domain, altitude formula, Jacobson radical, Rees ring, analytically irreducible domain, unmixed domain.

Preparation and Submission of Graphics

Instructions for preparing and submitting graphics are available for the publication for which an author is submitting at www.ams.org/journals. Select the journal; and then choose ‘Preparing graphics’ (<ftp://ftp.ams.org/pub/author-info/documentation/creating-graphics.pdf>) in the “For Author” column.

Submitting Accepted Articles

Instructions for submitting accepted articles can be found at www.ams.org/authors/submitelecms.html. Files that are bundled may be submitted by any acceptable method. The preferred method is via the AMS web server; other acceptable methods are email (bundled and source files only), FTP, or on CD, diskette, or flash drive.

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