



# eLife review process FAQs

eLife's peer-review process is changing. From January 2023, eLife will no longer make accept/reject decisions after peer review. Instead, every preprint sent for peer review will be published on the eLife website as a “Reviewed Preprint” that includes detailed public reviews, an eLife assessment, and a response from the authors (if they have submitted one).

## What is changing?

The process will be largely unchanged, but the output will be fundamentally different. With publishing decisions no longer a goal of peer review, we will be able to focus on the production of constructive public reviews that evaluate the paper before us. The post-review consultation session will now be directed at constructing a concise assessment that summarises the reviewers’ and editor’s view of the significance of the findings and the evidence for them.

The major changes will be:

- We will no longer make accept or reject decisions following peer review.
- Every article sent out for peer review will be published on eLife’s website as a Reviewed Preprint (which will include the eLife assessment, the public reviews and, if available, a response from the authors).
- Reviewed Preprints will be posted two weeks after they have been sent to the authors, to allow time for the authors to prepare a response.
- The eLife assessment will capture the major conclusions of the review process, and will provide authors and readers with an assessment of the significance of the findings and the strength of the evidence for them.
- Authors will be able to submit revised manuscripts, which will also be published as Reviewed Preprints containing updated peer reviews and eLife assessments.
- Authors can, at any time following peer review, declare that the current Reviewed Preprint is the “Version of Record”.
- The fee for publishing with eLife will be reduced from \$3,000 to \$2,000, charged at the point we commit to peer reviewing the work.



## What is staying the same?

- We will continue to only review research papers that have been made available as preprints.
- Editors decide which preprints we should review, although their focus will now be on identifying papers where the reviews will be of greatest public value.
- We will continue to use a consultative peer review process that produces the following outputs:
  - Public reviews that describe the strengths and weaknesses of the work and indicate whether the claims and conclusions are justified by the data.
  - An eLife Assessment that captures the major conclusions of the review process.
  - Suggestions for the authors, designed to help them advance their science and improve their manuscript.

We will also continue to offer a range of services typical for traditional scientific and medical journals, including the production of versions of record, indexing and archiving. We will also continue to publish magazine content and issue press releases.

## Will we peer review all submissions?

No. We do not have the capacity at this point in time to review every submission, so we will still be asking Reviewing Editors if they are willing to handle submissions. But instead of asking them if they think the findings of the paper are potentially significant, as we do now, we will ask them if they believe that having eLife public reviews of the preprint will be of value to a broad community and if we have the appropriate expertise on our editorial board to generate high quality peer reviews of the work.

## What is a Reviewed Preprint?

Once a preprint has been peer-reviewed by eLife, we publish a Reviewed Preprint – a journal quality document including the full text of the preprint, the eLife assessment, and the public peer reviews. Reviewed Preprints will receive a DOI and eLife citation.

## When will the Reviewed Preprint be posted?

The Reviewed Preprint will be typically posted two weeks after they are sent to the authors (although authors can request to have them posted sooner).



## What is an eLife assessment?

An eLife assessment is a concise assessment of the significance of the findings and the strength of the evidence reported in a preprint. When writing the eLife assessment, the editors and reviewers will use a common vocabulary to make the process more consistent. This approach will provide readers with an assessment of the work that is richer and more nuanced than that previously conveyed by the statement “published in eLife”.

## What if there are factual errors in the reviews?

Authors should alert the editorial office as soon as possible upon receiving the public reviews if there are any factual errors, or any other significant concerns about their contents, so that they can be discussed and corrected before being posted online.

## If authors do not agree with the eLife assessment or public reviews, can they withdraw or prevent the public reviews being posted?

The focus of our peer review and editorial process is the production of substantive, constructive and public assessments and detailed public peer reviews. By entering into the review process, authors agree to have an eLife assessment and public reviews posted online as a Reviewed Preprint. However, authors can ask for any factual errors in the public reviews to be corrected before publication. The authors can also provide responses to accompany the public reviews.

## Can authors submit a revision?

Of course. We welcome revisions that respond to the review process, and will decide whether to re-review any revisions and publish an updated Reviewed Preprint along with updated peer reviews and an eLife assessment.

## Do I have to submit a revision?

No. If the authors are comfortable with the current version of their manuscript and our peer reviews and evaluation, they do not need to submit a revision.

## What is a “Version of Record”?

At any point after peer review by eLife, authors can ask to have the most recent eLife Reviewed Preprint declared the “Version of Record” (VOR). The VOR will be identical to the most recent Reviewed Preprint, outside of minor changes that do not affect the scientific content. The VOR will be expected to meet more stringent policies and standards around ethics and data availability.

The production of a VOR serves several purposes. First, its publication marks the formal end of eLife’s peer review process for the work, and is therefore akin to a traditional journal paper.



Second, many databases like PubMed will generally only index the final version of a paper, and, in such cases the publication of a VOR will trigger database submission.

### Can I submit my paper somewhere else following peer review by eLife?

As far as eLife is concerned, authors can do anything with their paper that they want to. It is their paper, not ours. This includes, but is not limited to, having their work assessed by a traditional journal on the basis of eLife reviews. We expect most authors will not find this necessary or desirable, but we will fully support whatever choice the authors make.

### Do authors need to have posted a preprint before submission to eLife?

No, authors can still submit to eLife without having posted a preprint. During submission, we will ask if the work has been posted as a preprint. If not, authors can provide information to facilitate posting a preprint by staff, should eLife decide to proceed with a public peer review process.

### What will be the fee for a Reviewed Preprint?

There is a fee of \$2,000, charged at the point that a preprint is sent for peer review. This includes the cost of the initial evaluation, staff checks, peer review, the publication of a Reviewed Preprint online, re-review, publication of subsequent versions of the Reviewed Preprint, and publication of the Version of Record (at the authors' request). Authors who cannot afford the fee can request a full waiver as before.

### How do readers cite a Reviewed Preprint?

The DOI and citation details are included on each Reviewed Preprint. The DOI and citation remain the same across different versions, including the VOR, although it will also be possible to indicate a specific version in both citations and DOI.

### Will funders recognise a Reviewed Preprint in my grant application?

Preprints are accepted as evidence of progress in job applications and by an increasing number of funding organisations. ASAPbio provides a list of [funder policies](#) relating to preprints. [cOAlition S explicitly states](#) that "peer reviewed publications – defined here as scholarly papers that have been subject to a journal-independent standard peer review process with an implicit or explicit validation – are considered by most cOAlition S organisations to be of equivalent merit and status as peer-reviewed publications that are published in a recognised journal or on a platform." As an example, peer-reviewed preprints are recognized as eligibility criterion for [EMBO Postdoctoral Fellowships](#).



## Which preprint servers will authors be able to use?

We encourage authors to use bioRxiv or medRxiv but we can support any recognised preprint server.

## Will there be any grounds on which authors cannot opt for a Version of Record?

To be considered for a VOR, authors must first have a Reviewed Preprint by eLife, and they must agree to adhere to eLife's author guide and policies (for example around the availability of data, code, and materials). After eLife has confirmed the Reviewed Preprint meets these criteria, we will produce and publish a VOR, except in extreme cases where the Editor-in-Chief determines that doing so would constitute a threat to public health and safety.

## How long do authors have to request a Version of Record?

A Version of Record should usually be submitted within 12 months of the Reviewed Preprint or revised Reviewed Preprint being posted. Authors with a Reviewed Preprint who do not intend to submit an eLife Version of Record should let us know. If authors would like to be considered for an eLife Version of Record after 12 months have elapsed, they should contact us to discuss the circumstances.

## Will Reviewed Preprints and Versions of Record be indexed?

Reviewed Preprints will be indexed by Google Scholar. Versions of Record will be indexed more widely by a variety of services, including DOAJ, Google Scholar, PubMed, PubMed Central, Europe PMC, Scopus and Web of Science. Versions of Record will be archived in CLOCKSS.

## Will you pay peer reviewers?

No. We offer remuneration to our editors but not to our peer reviewers, although we do recognise that peer review is time consuming and a valuable service to the community.

## Will reviewer names be posted alongside the Reviewed Preprint or Version of Record?

All public comments posted alongside a preprint will be signed by eLife and not by individuals, putting the onus on eLife as an organisation and community to ensure that the outputs of our peer-review process are of the highest standard.

Reviewers will still have the option of being named to the authors after peer review.



## How will authors be able to correct or retract a Reviewed Preprint or Version of Record, if necessary?

**Reviewed Preprints:** if there are grounds for retraction (usually because there is clear evidence that the findings are unreliable), authors should contact the preprint server to request a withdrawal, and alert the editorial office ([editorial@elifesciences.org](mailto:editorial@elifesciences.org)). Sometimes there may be grounds for eLife to initiate a retraction process, in which case this will be discussed with the authors. Important corrections can be made to a Reviewed Preprint by updating or revising their preprint, and requesting re-review.

**Versions of Record:** if there are grounds for correction or retraction, please contact the editorial office. Authors are also asked to contact the preprint server to request a withdrawal. Important corrections can be considered to the Version of Record in some circumstances: please contact the production office to discuss this further ([production@elifesciences.org](mailto:production@elifesciences.org)).