

# **UCLA**

## **UCLA Previously Published Works**

### **Title**

Suggesting Reviewers to Improve Your Manuscript

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/79z208bc>

### **Journal**

The Journal of Physical Chemistry A, 125(27)

### **ISSN**

1089-5639

### **Authors**

Alexandrova, Anastassia N  
Hartland, Gregory V

### **Publication Date**

2021-07-15

### **DOI**

10.1021/acs.jpca.1c05521

Peer reviewed

## **The Art of Suggesting Reviewers**

You've just spent what may have been years performing experiments or simulations, or developing a new theory, and your paper is finally ready to be submitted. The cover letter is done, and you have uploaded your co-authors names, affiliations and contact information into the journal submission website, and there is just one more thing to do: come up with names for suggested reviewers. For us (and we are sure this is true for lots of other scientists) this is the last thing we think about when preparing a paper. However, making good suggestions for reviewers is a big help for editors, and getting meaningful reviews for your work is an important part of the scientific process. This Viewpoint provides a few tips for suggesting reviewers that will make life easier for the editors of your paper, and will help improve your paper.

### **Suggested Reviewers 101:**

First some don'ts for suggesting reviewers:

- Don't just invite your friends or folks at your institution or the institution of one of the co-authors. Many editors can tell you that your friends do not necessarily give good reviews, and people from one of the institutions that supported the work are excluded from providing reviews. Also, having one of your friends give a brief review recommending publication without any substance comments doesn't help improve the paper, and won't weigh very heavily when the editor has to make a decision.
- On a related note, if you suggest friends who additionally do not have the expertise to review the paper (this is easy for the editor to see), we are likely to return the paper with a request to provide a revised and meaningful list of suggested reviewers. As anecdotal as

it might sound, we've seen acupuncture specialists being suggested as reviewers of catalysis papers.

- Don't suggest people who are retired or dead. Be diligent to make sure the suggested reviewers are active scientists, who can be contacted by the journal. Emeritus professors/retired scientists have a wealth of experience that can be beneficial. However, often when people retire it is because they no longer want to work, and doing reviews is work!
- Don't only suggest Nobel Prize winners, or members of the National Academy. Researchers who have reached high levels of achievement in science are often generous with their time in providing reviews. However, these people are very busy and may not have time to review your paper. Just because your paper is about quantum dots, doesn't mean that Paul Alivisatos wants to review it.

Now the do's:

- Suggest scientists/engineers who are active researchers and regular contributors to the journal, and who work in the field of research that is the topic of your paper. You could choose scientists who have recently cited one of your papers, or published related work in the journal.
- Make sure you give the required number of reviewers (for the *Journal of Physical Chemistry* and many other ACS journals this is now at least XX reviewers). Sometimes it is hard to get reviewers for a paper, and you don't want your paper returned because the editors can't find anyone in the journal data base to give a review. This is also often a sign that you have submitted to paper to the wrong journal, but that is another story.

- For editors, knowing the expertise of your suggested reviewers helps finding additional good reviewers for your paper. For example, an expert in a specific technique (whether experimental or computational) might be good to recruit as a reviewer, and your suggestion might help the editor identify this need. Hence, please utilize the “Reason” prompt when suggesting a reviewer, to provide brief but specific information about the suggested reviewer. For example, “expert in DFT” or “knowledgeable about similar systems” would not be specific enough, whereas, for example, “measured electric fields at interfaces using Stark spectroscopy” or “studies metalloenzyme mechanisms with multireference methods” would provide enough detail.

#### **Advanced Suggested Reviewers:**

Science is a global endeavor that benefits from the input from researchers from all walks of life. Having women and researchers from underrepresented minoritized groups contribute their voices to the scientific process is important for ACS journals. This is also true for the review process. Getting diverse opinions about your work can only make the final paper stronger. So, spend some time thinking about researchers from different backgrounds who could contribute a review.