How to communicate a decision to reject

It's one of the hardest parts of an editor's job – how to handle a rejection of a submission. Here are our top tips for rejecting submissions while keeping everyone happy.

Giving an author a great rejection experience

- Ensure the communication is polite and professional, and quick.
- Authors appreciate a rapid speed to first decision about their manuscript, particularly if it is rejected.
- If you receive an unnecessarily rude or offensive reviewer report, remove those comments before sending to the authors.
- Try to avoid the term ‘rejected’ in relation to papers when communicating with authors. Instead, use ‘declined’ or ‘deemed unsuitable for publication’.

If they want to appeal

We cannot eliminate the possibility of bad reviews or reviewer misconduct, so you may like to consider having an appeals procedure in place to address these concerns.

Think about:

- How formal should the appeal be?
- How much detail is necessary?
- Should the appeal be handled by a different editor than the one who made the original decision?
- How is the appeal to be assessed?

When overriding reviewer comments

Another potentially awkward situation is when your decision overrides a reviewer's recommendation. The personal touch can help a lot here.

Be sure to send the reviewer a personal email to letting them know the reasons for your decision.

Always remember

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