

Autism in Adulthood

Information for Autistic Reviewers

Basic Information about the Journal:

What is this journal about?

Autism in Adulthood is a peer-reviewed, academic journal focused on the most pressing issues affecting autistic adults, from emerging adulthood to later life. We cover a large range of topics related to autism in adulthood. We publish original research studies, as well as other types of articles, such as in-depth analyses, literature reviews, essays, and interviews.

Who publishes this journal?

Autism in Adulthood is published by [Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.](#)

Who leads this journal?

Autism in Adulthood is led by Editor-in-Chief Christina Nicolaidis, MD, MPH, Associate Editor Dora Raymaker, PhD, and an international Editorial Board that includes other leading researchers, autistic community leaders, and practitioners.

How are autistic people included?

Autism in Adulthood is deeply committed to integrating the contributions of autistic adults into the peer-reviewed literature. We do so in a number of ways: 1) autistic adults, including Associate Editor, Dora Raymaker, PhD, and ten other autistic Editorial Board members, hold important leadership positions; 2) we expect to regularly include articles written by autistic adults in the journal; 3) every manuscript is reviewed by at least one autistic adult; 4) every article has a lay summary that is accessible to autistic adults and their families.

How is the journal be available?

The journal is available in print and online.

When was the journal first published and how often do issues come out?

We published a Preview Issue in May 2018 and then officially launched the journal in the beginning of 2019. We publish four print issues per year.

How do people get access to read this journal?

This is a subscription-based journal, with an open access option. That means that people need to have a subscription to read the full-text version of most articles. However, authors can choose to pay a fee to make their papers “open access” (which means anyone can read those articles for free.) Also, when papers are first published, they are often available online for a limited time without a subscription. Each paper will have a lay summary. Lay summaries will be available online without a subscription. We are actively looking for a sponsor to offer free subscriptions to autistic adults and their families.

Information about the Peer Review Process

What is scientific peer-review, in general?

Peer review is the process that scientists use to make sure that the work being published in academic journals is of high quality. It usually relies on “peers” – experts in the same field, with similar skills and expertise as the person writing the paper. These peers evaluate the work and make suggestions for how to improve it. The journal editors decide whether to accept or reject a paper based on the peer reviewers’ comments.

What is the review process like for *Autism in Adulthood*?

Autism in Adulthood uses **both** a traditional, scientific peer-review process and an “autistic review” process. The Editors ask 2-3 peers-reviewers to review each manuscript. These peer-reviewers are usually doctoral-level scientists or scholars who have published similar types of work in academic journals. (Some of these scientists may happen to be autistic themselves, but many are not.) In addition to the traditional scientific peer review, the Editors also send manuscripts to autistic adults for an “autistic review.”

What are my responsibilities if I agree to review?

1. Reviewers have a responsibility to keep information they learned in a review **private and confidential**. This means they cannot contact an author and talk with them about it, they cannot share a paper they are reviewing with a friend or work colleague, and they cannot tell anyone about what they learned from reading the paper until it is published.
2. Reviewers agree to read the manuscript that was submitted to the journal, along with any accompanying materials (e.g. tables, a lay summary). They then provide a written review to help make the Editors decide whether or not to publish the paper.

Do I have to be a scientist or know a lot about science to be an autistic reviewer?

No. We are most interested in your opinion about whether the paper is important, useful, and respectful. Autistic reviewers are always welcome to comment on the science itself, but you do not have to be a scientist to be an autistic reviewer.

Will I be paid?

No. Typically, peer-reviewers do this type of work as volunteers. We are looking into ways to pay autistic reviewers, but that will not likely happen in the near future.

Does the journal use an open or masked peer review process?

Autism in Adulthood uses a “single-masked” peer-review process. (Note: this process is better known as a “single-blinded” review process, but we try to avoid that term out of respect for the Blind community.) A “single-masked” review process means that the reviewers know the names of the authors, but the authors do not know the names of the reviewers.

Will I be publicly identified as being on the autism spectrum?

About once a year, the journal publishes a list thanking everyone who has served as a reviewer. That list will not specify who is autistic. However, it may be possible for people to guess that reviewers who do not have advanced degrees were likely included in the process as autistic reviewers. Also, we will only share our list of autistic reviewers with the Editorial Board and the publishers, but it is impossible to completely guarantee the privacy of electronic information.

Can I include my role with *Autism in Adulthood* on things like resumes?

Yes, if you are invited to review a manuscript and you turn in a review, you can list yourself as a peer reviewer for *Autism in Adulthood*. Many people include that information on resumes, curriculum vitae, or online profiles. However, you should only include the name of the journal, not the title of the specific manuscript that you reviewed.

Next steps

I received an invitation to review a manuscript. What do I need to do now?

The message you received listed basic information about the manuscript, such as the title, the author names, and the abstract (short summary). Please follow the links in the email message to tell us if you agree to review the manuscript or not. It is ok to say “no” if you aren’t interested in the topic or if you cannot commit to reviewing the paper at this time.

How long will I have to review a manuscript?

Two weeks. Please do not agree to review the manuscript if you can’t commit to submit a review within 2 weeks!

What will happen if I agree to do the review?

1. You will get another email with a link to the materials that the authors submitted in the Manuscript Central system. You should follow this link – it will log you into the Manuscript Central system where you can see the materials and complete your review.
2. You will read these materials.
3. You will then fill out an evaluation form. A copy of the form is at the end of this message.
 - a. The form starts by asking for your recommendation about publication – the options are to accept the paper, ask for minor revisions (changes), ask for major revisions, or reject the paper. (Note – this is only a recommendation. The Editors will make the final decision based on the recommendations of all the reviewers and their own assessment of the manuscript.)
 - b. Next you will see a box for confidential comments to the Editor. **Only** use this box if there is something that you want to tell us, but that you don’t want the authors to see. (This box is optional.)
 - c. Next you will see a box for comments to the authors. **This is the most important part of the review.** The authors will get a letter that includes these comments, but they will not know they are coming from you. (The Editors also see these comments and use them to make their final decision.) You should include detailed comments about what you liked and didn’t like about the paper; any problems you noticed; and any recommendations for how the authors can improve the paper. Most people write about 2-4 pages of comments.
4. If you want to take a break, you can save your review and come back later. When you are finished, you will click on the submit button to submit your review. You cannot make changes to your review after you have submitted it.

What are the most important things I should be thinking about when I write my review?

When you write your comments to the authors, please consider the following questions:

- How well does this paper match with the journal's aims? (Note, you can read more about the journal's aims at <https://home.liebertpub.com/publications/autism-in-adulthood/646/overview>)
- How original are the paper's ideas, information and/or findings? (In other words, in this new?)
- How well does the paper comply with the journal's policy around the use of respectful language and ideas? (Note, you can see the journal's language policy at <https://home.liebertpub.com/publications/autism-in-adulthood/646/for-authors>.)
- How much impact do you feel the paper could have on practice, policy, research, or society?
- How clear and complete is the lay summary (for a non-academic audience)?
- What could the authors do to improve the manuscript?

You are more than welcome to also comment about the scientific methods and writing, but do not feel that you have to. Optional things to consider include:

- How appropriate and rigorous are the methods? (In other words, is this true?)
- How well is the main paper written for an academic audience?

What if I am asked to review an Insight Essay?

We have a special category of articles called "Insight Essays." These manuscripts are supposed to be memoir-style, personal essays from autistic adults or other stakeholders. The point is to give our academic readers (many of whom are non-autistic researchers, clinicians, or policy-makers) insights from autistic adults. They are not expected to be scientific in nature, but they should speak to an academic audience. When reviewing such manuscripts, think about the following questions:

- How clear is the message that the author is trying to convey?
- How useful do you think it would be for academic researchers, clinicians, or policy-makers to hear this message?
- How compelling is the essay?
- How well is the essay written?
- What might make the essay more useful to readers of *Autism in Adulthood*?

Who will decide what happens to the manuscript?

The Editors will read your review, as well as reviews from other experts. They will take all the opinions into consideration and decide whether to reject the manuscript, accept it, or ask the authors to make changes and resubmit it. In some cases, the Editor may ask you to do a second review of a resubmitted paper. The Editors make the final decision as to whether or not to publish a paper.

How will I know what happened to the manuscript?

You will receive a copy of the email message that the Editors send to the authors. The authors will not see that you have received a copy of that letter. (In other words, the computer automatically includes your address on the BCC or "blind carbon copy" line.) Do not "reply all" to that letter, because that may give away your identity. The decision letter generally includes a

note from the Editors explaining their decision and the next steps, as well as a copy of all the other reviewer comments.

How often will I be asked to review manuscripts?

Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict. Some reviewers may only be asked to review a manuscript every few years (and possibly not at all). Others may be asked a few times per year. It depends on how many manuscripts get submitted to the journal and how well they match up with your interests. Regardless, we greatly appreciate your willingness to review.

Other Information

Can I tell others about the journal and the opportunity to serve as an autistic reviewer?

Of course. If they are interested, just have them send a message to autisminadulthood@pdx.edu.

How can I get more information?

If you have additional questions, contact autisminadulthood@pdx.edu.

Thank you so much for your interest in our journal!

And please have patience with us as we build our new journal. We are working hard to make the journal as inclusive and useful as possible. As we use our new autistic review process, we are learning some important lessons and making changes as we go. We always welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Thanks for helping us make *Autism in Adulthood* the home for research and scholarship on the most pressing issues affecting autistic adults!

Sincerely,

Christina Nicolaidis, MD, MPH

Editor-in-Chief, *Autism in Adulthood*