

Part 2. The Review Process

Suggestions on what to do when reviews are available:

1. Read all the reviews at least twice to become familiar with the contents and basic tone of the reviews. Keep in mind that you will receive conflicting comments from reviewers. Sometimes reviewers are selected who are known to have a different perspective, so that an author's perspective is sharpened and a specific market niche is defined. Try not to take critical comments as a personal attack. Sometimes the most critical reviews are the most helpful in the process.
2. Questions to ask yourself as you read the reviews:
 - What are the recurring "big picture" issues?
 - Is there anything that more than one reviewer mentioned?
 - According to the reviewers, what are the strengths of the book? How can you capitalize on those strengths and make them apparent to potential adopters and users?
 - According to the reviewers, in what areas could this book improve? How can you address shortcomings?
 - Is a reviewer's perception of what the book is or does, or how well it does it, markedly different from your own perception? How so? Why might that be? How can you rectify this discrepancy?
3. Prioritize the reviews, perhaps with help from your Acquisitions Editor (AE), from most to least helpful. For example, reviewers who answer questions with one word, or who are overly positive (or negative) likely won't help. Look for comments supported by explanation and examples and a tone that challenges you to excel, but is reasonable.

Good reviewers will:

- Provide additional appropriate reference/research sources.
- Provide a suggested reorganization or alternate placement.
- Suggest re-emphasis for material/concepts and give reasons why.
- Provide alternate views or fresh insights.
- Provide insights about strengths and weaknesses of competing books.

Reviewers who are least helpful:

- Only correct your grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
 - Say only wonderful things.
 - Get caught up in chapter sequencing rather than real issues of organization.
 - Harp on one topic or one area that annoys them and let that single item color the rest of their comments.
4. Separate the reviewers' comments into subcategories, such as:
 - General comments
 - Organization
 - Corrections
 - Depth of coverage/rigor issues
 - Writing style/clarity
 - Features
 - Supplements
 5. It may be helpful to make a table with the reviewer number across one axis and the chapter number across the other axis, and then write in the reviewer comments. This can help give you a "macro" picture and help you compare the reviewer comments more easily.
 6. If you receive a set of annotated pages from the reviewers, study these carefully! Many reviewers put their most meaningful comments onto the manuscript pages; missing these could devalue the review experience.
 7. Rate the comments by category and degree of urgency. For example, if you use A, B, and C as your ratings, A's would be critical changes or most difficult; B's may include technical corrections or rewording; and C's would be minor issues that are relatively unimportant. Keep track of these comments and be prepared to discuss their priority with your AE! It is important to understand why reviewers criticize certain sections of a book. Reviewers may say, "I don't like the coverage of" or "This topic isn't covered well," when they really mean, "The book I use covers this topic in much more depth." It is the author's ultimate responsibility to act upon these criticisms. If you are unsure of what to do, consult with your AE.
 8. Your AE may send you a review synopsis and/or analysis. Compare your notes, as content expert, to his or hers. It is often helpful to have the AE's market-oriented point of view (and objectivity) to provide guidance. Compare your

analysis with his or hers and work to a mutually agreeable plan for the revision or next draft.