Writing the Revise and Resubmit Letter

Although receiving a "revise and resubmit" notice after submitting a paper to an academic journal means more revisions are in your future, it's still good news. Responding to the reviewers' comments, while laborious and time-consuming, will almost always increase the quality of your paper. Once you've finished revising, the next step is writing the letter or memo that you will send with the revised version of your article. The "revise and resubmit letter" documents how you have responded to *all* of your reviewers' comments. Recent advice suggests that the revise and resubmit letter is becoming a recognizable genre with certain "rhetorical moves" and that following these moves influences the likelihood that your paper will be accepted.

5 Rhetorical Moves for the Resubmit Letter

Even though some of the reviewer comments might be unpleasant, your revise and resubmit letter should be formal and polite. While it's natural to be irritated or upset upon receiving comments, remember that the reviewers are critiquing your work, not you. Following the genre moves below will help you create a polite, appropriate, and readable letter. (See the next page for sample phrases to help you accomplish each move.)

1. **Express gratitude.** It is almost always appropriate to open the letter with an expression of gratitude. Reviewers have invested time and brainpower in providing detailed and comprehensive comments. Thank them for their efforts.
2. **Signal attention to review comments.** Provide an explicit reference to your attention to the comments made by the reviewers and the editor (if given). This move signals that you have taken their comments seriously. Make this move early in the letter.
3. **Claim positive results.** Like signaling attention to the comments, claiming positive results acknowledges that the reviewer's insight has significantly improved your paper. It also helps create a polite, formal tone.
4. **Preview content.** Before you list the comments and how you addressed them, first provide the editor with a roadmap for how to read. This preview will make it easier for the editor to work through your letter and your resubmitted, revised draft.
5. **Respond to specific comments.** The bulk of your letter should be your point-by-point response to the specific comments of the reviewers (and the editor). Each response should describe the changes you made. If you did not address a comment in your revisions, make sure to provide a reasoned explanation in your letter. You are allowed to disagree with specific reviewer comments, but say so honestly and politely, explaining your decision carefully and using examples from the literature whenever possible.

How to Respond to Comments

While the advice varies on **how** to structure your responses to reviewers' comments, consensus suggests that you:

- Restate (verbatim) a reviewer's comment and follow it with an explanation of how you addressed (or did not address) the concern.
- Include any information (page, paragraph, and/or line numbers) that will increase the readability of your letter.

There are multiple ways to structure your responses; what's important is that you make your letter as polite and readable as possible.

Additional Resources

http://www.editage.com/insights/tips-for-authors-submitting-a-revised-manuscript
http://www.editage.com/insights/dos-and-donts-for-a-great-cover-letter
http://www.clinchem.org/content/57/4/551.full

This handout was adapted from

Moves	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
1. Express gratitude	We thank Reviewer A for the constructive comments on our manuscript	We would like to thank Reviewer 1 for the effort and time he/she put in...	We would like to express our sincere gratitude to you and the reviewers	Than you for the opportunity to revise our paper once more for the Journal of _____
2. Signal attention to review comments	We have made every attempt to fully address these comments in the revised manuscript	...we have addressed all of the comments offered by Reviewer 1.	We have revised our paper along the lines outlined by your and the reviewers.	We are grateful for your careful and considered comments and have tried to respond to each
3. Claim positive results	...and we believe these revisions have resulted in a significantly improved manuscript.	We honestly feel that his/her insightful suggestions helped us in improving the manuscript...	We agree that focusing on_____ strengthened our manuscript and allowed us to make a greater theoretical and practical contribution...	We believe the additional analyses discussed above have helped us to substantially improve our manuscript.
4. Preview content	Reviewer A's original comments are listed below (in italics) followed by our response to each comment.	Below, we outline how we have handled each of Reviewer 1's comments. We reiterate each suggestion in (bold/italics)	The following paragraphs summarize our responses to the Associate Editor's Comments (AEC) and the Reviewer's Comments (RC)	Where appropriate, we have grouped related comments from each referee.
5. Respond to specific comment	a. Repeat comment	b. Evaluate comment	c. Describe specific revisions	d. Justify specific revisions
	Social image theory is used to develop H1a and b. While I agree staff auditors' attempt to gain approval... [writer's response] *I must admit that I do no understand the first finding. I think the authors should try to explain it in a better way.* [writer's response]	This is a good point that has lead to a rewrite of this section of the paper. As suggested, ...we agree that our rather lengthy review limited the opportunity to expand in other areas. Your comments made us think more deeply about_____	Specifically, we have removed the discussion of _____. We now rely more heavily on _____. We elaborate the on this finding in our manuscript (please see the 1st full paragraph on p. ##). We now incorporate this discussion of _____ in the revised document.	The _____literature discussing this_____ suggests that _____. For example X (date) shows... ...give the fact that_____ (citation; citation), then one would expect...