

All aboard the transfer train

 Check for updates

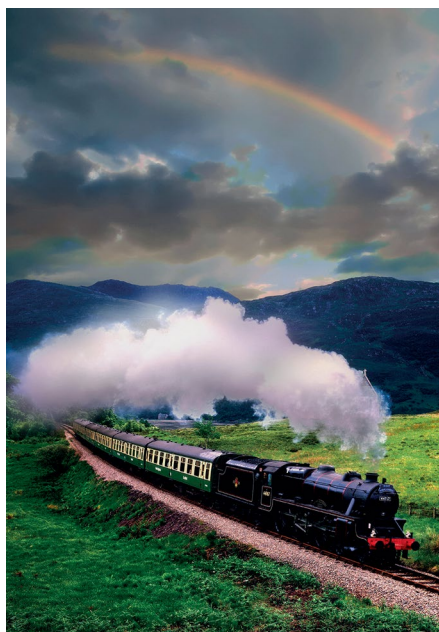
One journal's reject may be another journal's gem. Our editors aim to direct rejected manuscripts towards a more suitable destination journal in our transfer network.

One clear benefit of the increasing number of *Nature*-titled journals is that there is a destination for many more excellent papers than used to be possible, with the ability to transfer a manuscript to another title if the author's first choice doesn't work out. Within this network of journals spanning different scopes and degrees of selectivity, each journal can enforce its own editorial criteria and maintain its editorial independence. A journal's editors also serve as conductors on the transfer railway, pointing declined manuscripts in the direction of a more suitable destination. Although the choice of whether and where to transfer always lies with the author, we hope to guide authors on an efficient and successful route to publication via our manuscript transfer service.

Nature Geoscience's highly selective criteria mean that few submissions – usually between 15% and 20% – are sent for peer review. Of those, about half are rejected after review, some of which are technically fine but fall just short on the novelty and importance required. We pass on many papers that the editors think are very good.

That is why, if our editorial decision is negative, we next consider whether another journal in our transfer network would be a better match. This consideration is based on our understanding of what these journals are looking for, honed by experience and conversations with our editorial colleagues. In some cases, and if the authors have given us permission to do so at the time of submission, we consult with these colleagues directly regarding the prospects of a specific paper and can pass along a firm offer to send a paper for peer review.

The result is an editor recommendation of a suitable destination journal for most of the research papers we decline to publish.



Authors will find this recommendation at the end of the decision letter, along with a link to our manuscript transfer service and detailed guidance on how this service works (see <https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/for-authors/transfer>).

Of the papers *Nature Geoscience* declines to publish, editors recommend *Nature Communications*, *Communications Earth & Environment*, and other journals in the portfolio (most commonly *Scientific Reports*) for about a third each. More than half of manuscripts that follow the editor's advice and transfer to the recommended journal are sent out to review by the receiving journal and over a third are published, both higher rates than the average submission for these journals. The recommendation is not the reason for this higher rate of success: the editors at the receiving journal make their own assessment, based on their own editorial criteria, and papers still need to pass peer review. Instead, the value of the recommendation lies in the expertise of our editors to help authors most effectively to navigate the transfer network.

Although usually editors suggest a less selective title, this is not always the case: many

Nature journals overlap in scope – for example, *Nature Climate Change* also publishes climate science, *Nature Astronomy* also publishes planetary science, and *Nature Water* also publishes hydrology. These journals serve different audiences and thus are not selective in the same ways. Authors are welcome to transfer laterally and try one of our sibling titles, whether or not we suggest it.

Our transfer service can be particularly valuable after review. Transferring allows the referee comments to be used by the next journal and, for journals with in-house editors, the referee identities are passed on as well, which can speed up the review process. Here the editors act also as a guide: for manuscripts rejected following review, the *Nature Geoscience* editor considers the potential for the paper elsewhere in the Nature Portfolio railway. This is not always clear-cut if substantial technical concerns have been raised, or if the review process has become particularly fraught such that starting anew would likely be in the paper's best interest. For papers we deem to be strong candidates for transfer, we will consult with our editorial colleagues along the transfer network (again, if the author has opted into this service at submission) and we may be able to obtain an offer from *Nature Communications* or *Communications Earth and Environment* to continue the peer review process or even publish a revised manuscript.

Sometimes *Nature Geoscience* is not the first stop of a manuscript on the transfer train, but the destination. Transfers from *Nature*, both before and after review, form a sizable portion of our published papers. Whether a paper is a transfer or whether it is recommended our way by the previous editor does not affect our editorial assessment or guarantee its passage, but the high success rates reflect the effectiveness of the *Nature* editors' recommendations.

At *Nature Geoscience* we aim to help authors find the best route to publication, whether within our pages, or further along the Nature Portfolio transfer railway.

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