

Shaping a *Nature Reviews Cancer* article

How does a *Nature Reviews Cancer* Review or Perspectives article move from an idea to a published article? Here, in the spirit of transparency, we provide some insights into this process.

“we hope the work we do increases the value of our articles to the cancer research community”

We are frequently asked about the editorial process at *Nature Reviews Cancer*; that is, what goes into taking a Review or Perspectives article from an idea to a published article?

The *Nature Reviews Cancer* editorial team comprises three editors, all of whom have PhDs in a relevant subject, and we publish content on practically every topic within preclinical and translational cancer research. Our editors don't specialize in specific subject areas, and we are all able to handle an article on any topic that falls within our journal scope. Our goal is to have one editor handle a piece throughout the entire process, but this sometimes isn't possible; when a manuscript handover must take place, we ensure the new handling editor is updated with any relevant information on that article.

Most of our articles are invited by the editors, and shaping our journal's content through commissioning is arguably one of the most important parts of our job. Commissioning a review involves many discussions to ensure we all agree on the article's focus and scope and who we should ask to write it. Although we won't divulge all our secrets on commissioning a great review, it often involves an idea sparked while hearing a talk at a conference or reading a paper, followed by a great deal of literature searching, looking at past reviews on similar topics and talking to prospective authors.

After an article is commissioned, we begin helping the authors to shape the article structure and develop concepts for display items (figures, tables and boxes). Authors first submit a synopsis that shows broadly what topics will be covered and outlines the planned content, as well as ideas for display items. We provide comments related to the focus and scope of the article (aiming to minimize overlap with other commissioned or recently published articles), and its organization. Our authors then begin what is usually the hardest part for them — writing the first full draft. Once the draft is submitted to us, we read it with a focus on the overall structure, organization and flow, and consider whether we think the article would benefit from the addition or removal of any text sections or display items, and whether more insight or critical discussion is needed. If necessary, we will ask the author to revise with these comments in mind, our aim being to improve these aspects before the article is sent for formal peer review.

Peer review by several experts is crucial to ensure our articles are as scientifically accurate, fair and balanced as possible and that they are useful to both experts in the field and more general readers. If authors suggest referees, we will consider these when selecting appropriate experts, and we honour reasonable exclusions. The handling editor (sometimes in consultation with another editor on the team) will review the referees' reports carefully and provide guidance to the author regarding the required revisions. The referees are informed of the editorial decision and of the comments made by the other referees.

Perhaps surprisingly, we are under no obligation to accept a commissioned article. If peer reviewers recommend rejection, and the editor agrees with this assessment, or if the peer reviewers' comments are not adequately addressed following revision, that article will be rejected.

Once the handling editor believes that the article has been sufficiently revised in line with the referees' comments, it will be accepted in principle. The editor will then do a detailed line-by-line edit aimed at improving the scientific clarity, precision and accessibility of the text. At this point, our art editor will redraw the figures.

Following acceptance, the article is handed over to our production team and it goes through several more steps including copy editing, layout and proofreading. Before the article is sent for publication, the editor gives it one last read.

Our job does not stop once the article is published, as we also spread the word through showcasing each article on our website and promoting it on both our journal Twitter account (@NatureRevCancer) and the *Nature Reviews* Facebook page.

Although the overall amount of time put into any given article varies, we take pride in the service we provide to our authors and readers, and we hope the work we do increases the value of our articles to the cancer research community.

For more details, please see the information [For Authors](#) on our website.

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