

Editorial

Guidelines on the use of Artificial Intelligence for authors, reviewers, and editors of APJCN

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THE NEED FOR THESE GUIDELINES

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is an emerging technology with substantial potential to support scientific research. Scientific communities across various disciplines are actively exploring its capabilities, including its application in scientific writing, peer review, and editorial processes. However, the inappropriate use of AI may lead to academic misconduct and compromise research integrity. To promote the responsible and ethical use of AI by authors, reviewers, and editors, APJCN has developed these guidelines. The guidelines are based on widely accepted ethical principles within the scientific publishing community. Given the rapid evolution of generative AI technologies, these guidelines may be updated and revised as necessary.

GUIDANCE FOR AUTHORS

Permissible uses of AI

1. AI may be used for language editing, including grammar correction, sentence refinement, and improvements in clarity; however, the underlying ideas, arguments, and scientific reasoning must remain the original work of the authors.
2. AI-assisted tools, including retrieval-augmented systems, may be used to support literature searching, evidence synthesis, and reference formatting; however, authors must independently verify the accuracy, authenticity, and relevance of all cited sources.
3. AI may assist with data presentation, including visualization suggestions and consistency checks; however, the generation, alteration, or falsification of original data is strictly prohibited.
4. AI may be used to suggest manuscript structure and improve paragraph transitions; however, the research design, methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of findings must be developed independently by the authors.
5. AI may assist in the preparation of submission materials, including formatting checks, cover letter drafts, and response templates; however, all final submission materials must be reviewed and approved by the authors.
6. AI may be used to support ethical self-assessment, including plagiarism alerts, conflict-of-interest reminders, and risk identification; however, such tools are advisory only and do not replace author responsibility for ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

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Prohibited uses of AI

1. The use of AI to generate, alter, fabricate, or manipulate data, images, or statistical results in a manner that misrepresents the research record is strictly prohibited.
2. AI must not be used to ghostwrite the core intellectual content of a manuscript, including original hypotheses, arguments, analyses, interpretations or conclusions.
3. Authors must not cite AI-generated or unverified references. All cited works, including author names, titles, publication details and identifiers such as DOIs, must be traceable, accurate, and verified against the original sources.
4. AI must not be used to paraphrase existing content for the purpose of evading plagiarism detection. Manuscripts must reflect original writing and be supported by appropriate citations.
5. Any material use of AI must be transparently disclosed, including the purpose of use and the tools employed. Failure to disclose material AI assistance may constitute academic misconduct.
6. AI tools may not be listed as authors and cannot assume authorship responsibilities. All named authors remain fully accountable for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and compliance of the manuscript.

AI tool terms and copyright protection

Before using any AI tool, authors must review its terms of service and confirm that:

1. The AI tool does not claim ownership of, or impose restrictions on, user-generated content
2. The AI tool does not contain terms that prohibit commercial publication or restrict journal publication rights
3. The AI tool does not automatically use user content for model training, or provides an option to opt-out of such use
4. Priority is given to enterprise-grade or institutionally approved AI tools when handling unpublished research data or manuscripts.

AI disclosure templates

Authors should disclose the use of AI in the Methods section, Acknowledgements, or other appropriate section of the manuscript. Examples are provided below:

Template 1: Language editing

The authors acknowledge the use of [AI Tool Name] (accessed [Month Year]) for language editing and clarity improvement. All AI-assisted revisions were reviewed and approved by the authors.

Template 2: Literature review

Literature search was assisted by [AI Tool Name] (accessed [Month Year]). All cited references were independently verified by the authors against the primary sources.

Template 3: Data analysis

Data analysis scripts were developed with assistance from [AI Tool Name] (accessed [Month Year]). All codes were tested, validated, and verified by the authors.

AI and image guidelines (NEW)

Important: The use of AI to generate, enhance, alter or manipulate research photographs is strictly prohibited. AI-generated or AI-modified images may not be used as evidence to support scientific findings. Data visualizations and illustrative research diagrams created with AI assistance are permitted, provided that their use is appropriately disclosed and all information presented is accurate.

Image type	Permitted	Requirements
Data visualizations (charts, graphs, plots)	Permitted	AI assistance must be disclosed. Authors are responsible for verifying the accuracy and integrity of all underlying data.
Research diagrams (flowcharts, conceptual frameworks, graphical summaries)	Permitted	AI assistance must be disclosed. Authors must ensure that all content is factually accurate and scientifically appropriate.
Research photographs	AI enhancement prohibited	AI may be used for image analysis only. Research photographs must not be generated, enhanced, altered, or manipulated using AI
Factual/evidential images	Prohibited	Images used as scientific evidence or to support research findings must be authentic, unaltered, and not generated or modified by AI.

GUIDANCE FOR REVIEWERS

Six permissible uses of AI

Reviewers may use AI tools to support the efficiency and quality of the peer-review process, provided that all scientific judgments, recommendations, and final review comments remain the independent responsibility of the reviewer. Manuscript content must not be uploaded to AI tools that do not provide adequate confidentiality and data protection safeguards. Reviewers must not upload confidential manuscripts or peer-review materials to public AI systems that retain, store, or use submitted content for model training.

No.	Principle	Description
I	Language assistance for comprehension	AI may assist reviewers, particularly non-native English speakers, in understanding complex sentence structures, technical terminology, and manuscript language
II	Literature retrieval and cross-verification	AI may be used to identify relevant literature and assist in verifying the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of cited references
III	Initial data consistency screening	AI may assist in identifying inconsistencies among information presented in the abstract, main text, tables, figures, and supplementary materials
IV	Preliminary assessment of statistical methods	AI may be used to flag potential concerns regarding the application or reporting of statistical methods. Such observations should be treated as advisory and must not replace the reviewer's independent evaluation
V	Language polishing of review comments	AI may assist in improving the clarity, tone, and professionalism of review comments. However, the substantive content, critiques, and recommendations must reflect the reviewer's own assessment and judgement
VI	Format and reporting compliance check	AI may assist in assessing compliance with journal formatting requirements and reporting guidelines

Six prohibited practices

Reviewers must not use AI in ways that compromise manuscript confidentiality, replace independent scholarly judgement, or undermine the integrity of the peer-review process.

No.	Principle	Description
I	Uploading confidential manuscripts to unauthorized AI platforms	Manuscripts under review are confidential documents. Reviewers must not upload manuscript content, reviewer reports, or related materials to AI platforms that do not provide appropriate confidentiality, data protection, and security safeguards. Where AI assistance is permitted, preference should be given to locally deployed, institutionally approved, or secure enterprise systems
II	Using AI to generate the core content of reviews	The evaluation of scientific originality, methodological rigor, significance, validity, and overall merit must be conducted independently by the reviewer. AI must not generate the substantive content of peer-review reports.
III	Accepting AI judgment without verification	AI-generated observations, critiques, or recommendations may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading. Reviewers must independently verify all AI-assisted assessments against the original manuscript before incorporating them into their review reports
IV	Failing to disclose material AI assistance	Reviewers should disclose material AI assistance used during the review process in accordance with journal policies, including the stages of review for which AI tools were employed
V	Allowing AI to replace independent review judgement	Final decisions regarding scientific quality, methodological soundness, novelty, significance, and publication recommendations must be made solely by the reviewer. AI tools may provide support but must not replace independent scholarly judgement.
VI	Using AI to generate generic or template-based reviews	Review comments should be specific, constructive, and tailored to the manuscript under evaluation. AI must not be used to mass-produce generic or non-specific review reports.

GUIDANCE FOR EDITORS

Editorial use of AI

Editors may use AI tools to support editorial administration, communication, and workflow management, provided that such use does not compromise confidentiality, editorial independence, or research integrity. Editors remain fully responsible for all editorial decisions and actions.

Permitted uses

AI may be used to:

- Identify potential reviewers based on relevant subject-matter expertise and publication records
- Support plagiarism detection, research integrity screening, and other administrative checks
- Assist in the organization and monitoring of editorial workflows
- Improve the clarity, consistency and professionalism of editorial correspondence
- Summarize non-confidential information to facilitate editorial efficiency, provided that all outputs are independently reviewed.

Prohibited uses

Editors must not:

- Upload full unpublished manuscripts, reviewer reports, author correspondence, or other confidential editorial materials to unauthorized public AI platforms
- Delegate editorial decisions to AI systems or allow AI-generated recommendations to determine outcomes without human review
- Rely on AI-generated content, assessments, or recommendations without independent verification
- Use AI in any manner that compromises the confidentiality, fairness, transparency, or integrity of the editorial process.

Handling AI-related integrity concerns

Where AI use is disclosed or reasonably suspected in a submitted manuscript, editors should evaluate the matter in accordance with the journal's standards for transparency, integrity, and due process.

The use of AI, in itself, should not be regarded as grounds for rejection. Editorial assessment should focus on the scientific quality, originality, transparency, reliability, and integrity of the submitted work.

When concerns arise:

- Editors should first seek clarification directly from the authors
- Authors may be requested to provide details regarding the AI tools used, the purpose of use, and the extent of AI assistance
- Any substantiated concern should be addressed in accordance with the journal's established research integrity procedures
- Decisions should be based on evidence misconduct, misrepresentation, fabrication, undisclosed AI use, or other violations of journal policy rather than on the mere use of AI tools.

REVIEW AND CONTACT INFORMATION

These guidelines will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect developments in AI technologies, scholarly publishing practices, and the evolving needs of the scientific community.

Questions regarding the interpretation, implementation or application of these guidelines should be directed to the APJCN Editorial Office.

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