

Journal of Geophysical Research *- Atmospheres*

EDITORIAL POLICIES

[\[General Information\]](#) [\[Review Process\]](#) [\[Deadlines\]](#) [\[Comments and Replies\]](#) [\[Special Sections\]](#)

see also:

[\[Guidelines for Authors\]](#) [\[Submission Information\]](#) [\[Guidelines for Reviewers\]](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Since April 1996, the *Journal of Geophysical Research - Atmospheres* is being published twice monthly. Each issue includes papers related to one of three subsets: Climate and Dynamics, Aerosols and Clouds, and Composition and Chemistry. The four editors, [Alan Robock](#), [Steven Pawson](#), [Colin O'Dowd](#), and [Darin Toohey](#), divide the submitted papers according to topics, and each handle one fourth of all submitted manuscripts. All manuscripts must be submitted directly to AGU in Washington, DC. See the [new submission instructions](#) for details.

Three different categories of papers are considered: 1. Scientific articles; 2. Methodology and instrument papers; and 3. Comments. The cover letter to the editor should specify the category to which the manuscript belongs.

REVIEW PROCESS

The assistance of the atmospheric science community to ensure high-quality refereeing is of pivotal importance to achieving a uniformly high standard for the quality of manuscripts accepted for publication in *JGR-Atmospheres*. All potential referees will be contacted electronic mail to inquire as to their willingness to review papers. Your willingness to provide thoughtful and timely reviews is crucial as outstanding reviewing is the most important factor in determining the excellence of our journal. Thus, refereeing is considered to be an important duty to the community: Each paper needs at least two reviewers. Those who submit papers, but consistently refuse to review or to provide timely reviews, take an unfair advantage of the peer review system.

A four week turnaround period is assigned to referees conducting a review of a manuscript. Referees are asked to rate the manuscript as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor, and to summarize their recommendation by selecting one of the following:

- (1) I find the paper acceptable in its present form.
- (2) I find the paper acceptable with minor revisions described in my written report.

(3) The paper may be acceptable after important revisions. My written report describes my specific objections and suggests potential solutions. The revisions are expected to take no more than 4 weeks.

(4) The paper is not acceptable in its current form. My written report describes my specific objections and suggests potential solutions. The author should be encouraged to revise and resubmit the paper as it contains significant results and is expected to make an important contribution.

(5) The paper is not acceptable in anything resembling its present form. My written report describes my specific objections.

As well, reviewers are specifically asked to address the issue of manuscript length. *JGR-Atmospheres* is currently the fastest growing and largest of the journals published by AGU. With this growing number of articles, the publication of papers that are overly long represents a burden to the community. Nonetheless, the editors do not wish to encourage the artificial breakup of manuscripts to avoid excess page charges or to achieve a higher number of first-author publications. The referees are instructed to include an assessment of the manuscript's length in their report, stating whether the paper's length is appropriate as is, or that the paper should be shortened or lengthened. Recommendations for a change in paper length should include specific suggestions regarding how this could be accomplished.

To eliminate potentially endless revisions and "reviewer fatigue," the editors of *JGR-Atmospheres* have decided to adopt the above-listed five criteria. In particular, it should be noted that Criteria (3) and (4) used to be combined in a single category called "major revision." Authors of papers in that category used to be given a period of three months to revise their manuscripts. Typically, papers not yet ready for publication but containing important results, were the most time-consuming papers for the reviewers (which often had to see the papers several times), the editor, and the staff at the editorial office. Thus, these papers put a major burden on our community. Papers ranked (4) will generally be rejected, but the authors will be encouraged to improve their manuscript and resubmit. This "soft" rejection is somewhat similar to a request for a major revision, except that authors have all the time really needed to make a significant contribution, worth publication in *JGR-Atmospheres*. When/if resubmitted, the editors have the choice to use the same or different reviewers, and use additional reviewers if needed.

In most cases the submitted papers will be reviewed by three referees. In some cases, even two positive reviews cannot eliminate the negative comments made by one expert.

Under normal circumstances, the editors will not discuss the reviewers' comments with authors until all comments have been received at the editorial office. The editor assistants are instructed not to communicate to authors any part of the review, including the overall rating given by a reviewer. Authors are asked not to embarrass the editor assistants with questions that they are not allowed to answer.

Authors of papers which need to be revised (either minor or major revision) MUST send back a point-by-point response to ALL comments and suggestions made by the reviewers and, if provided, the associate editor. In particular, if the authors disagree with a specific comment or suggestion, it is very important to clearly explain why they do not believe that this comment or suggestion is appropriate. Exaggerated, cynical, or derogatory remarks to reviewers will be returned to authors without consideration and can lead to the rejection of the manuscript. At best, they delay the publication process and should be completely avoided.

Authors encouraged to resubmit a rejected paper are also requested to provide a point-by-point response to ALL comments and suggestions made by the reviewers and/or associate editors. In this case, it is particularly important to emphasize how each of the major problems which led to the rejection of the

manuscript have been addressed.

DEADLINES

Under normal circumstances, manuscripts and revisions are handled by the editor assistants and the editor within 48 hours.

Manuscript Revisions:

A four-week period will be assigned for revision of manuscripts.

Termination:

When a paper cannot be revised according to the deadline requested by the editor, the corresponding author should contact the editor to discuss the problem before the deadline has expired. An extension can be granted by the editor, following careful examination of the file. Papers not received on time will be terminated. If a revised paper is received after it has been terminated, it will be considered as a new submission.

Papers belonging to a [Special Section](#) will be handled according to this section specific deadlines (see below).

COMMENTS AND REPLIES

Comment/reply exchanges provide a convenient opportunity to air differences of opinion or interpretation. Such public exposure to debates about crucial "fine points" are an important part of *JGR-Atmospheres* and, therefore, these exchanges are strongly encouraged.

There is, however, an important limitation to the content of comment/reply exchanges. They must not become "backdoor vehicles" to introduce new, previously unpublished, unrefereed materials to *JGR-Atmospheres*. High-quality refereeing and fair treatment of materials submitted for publication are key aspects of our "quality control" process, and unrefereed materials must not be allowed to slip into the journal in any form, including comments and replies.

In order to make sure that this principle is upheld, both comments and replies should follow the guidelines below.

1. Only comments on papers published in *JGR-Atmospheres* will be considered.
2. The basis of the arguments in comments and replies should be materials published in high-quality journals. They will undergo full peer review, and will be evaluated as a regular submission.
3. Comments should be submitted to the editor, who initially evaluates the scientific merit. If the editor decides that a comment potentially merits publication, it is forwarded to the authors of the original manuscript. They are invited to prepare a reply within 1 month's time. It is not necessary to submit a reply and should be done only if it is warranted. A reply is forwarded by the editor's office to the authors of the comment, and they are invited to modify the comment. A modified comment will be forwarded to the authors of the reply, and they will be asked to modify their reply. This process will continue until

convergence or an impasse is reached, at which point the comment and reply may undergo review. If additional issues are raised during review, the comment and reply will be returned to the relevant authors for revision prior to the editor's final decision regarding publication of the comment and reply. Authors of both comment and reply are encouraged to communicate directly with each other. By such exchanges it is hoped that a statement and resolution of the scientific issue involved will be achieved via one published comment and its reply.

The following are additional ground rules for a comment/reply exchange:

1. Personal attacks or any remarks deviating from scientific discussion should be avoided.
2. Participants are expected to write their revisions in a very timely manner; no more than 3 weeks should be taken for revisions.
3. The progress of the exchange will be monitored by the editor, and the editor may decide at any point to stop the process and to reject the comment and reply or to publish the comment without a reply.

SPECIAL SECTIONS

Special sections offer a unique avenue for publication of a collection of papers with a common focus or theme in a regular issue of the journal.

A written request for a special section should be submitted to the editor. The request should include a statement regarding the focus and an explanation of why a special section is justified.

The following policies have been adopted to ensure that manuscripts submitted for potential publication in a special section are judged by the same standards as all others. These policies will also allow our office to improve its responsiveness to the community.

1. Only the four permanent editors of *JGR-Atmospheres* can edit special sections (there are no guest editors);
2. Whenever possible, at least one of the reviewers will be selected from colleagues who are outside the associated special section's science team or authorship;
3. Referees will often understand from the manuscript references that the paper they have been asked to review has been submitted for potential publication as part of a specific collection of manuscripts. The reviewers will be instructed that the manuscript must meet the same rigorous standards as all others under consideration for publication in *JGR-Atmospheres*. Each Special Section paper will be evaluated on its own merits, and only those that are found to "stand alone" as important contributions will be accepted for publication;
4. The identification of a Special Section Coordinator who will help to organize the papers that will be submitted to *JGR-Atmospheres* is requested. The Coordinator will also be responsible for the submission of an overview paper and/or preface, if needed;
5. A deadline for manuscript submission, set following consultation with the Special Section Coordinator, will be enforced by our office. Manuscripts submitted after the deadline will be included in the special section if they are able to "catch up" in the review/revision process. Publication of the special

section will not be delayed to accommodate late submissions or manuscripts which require extensive revision. At the time that the deadline of submission has been set by the editor and the Special Section Coordinator, deadlines for each step of the review process will also be set. Typically, the first cycle of reviews will be completed three months after the deadline of submission. The revised manuscripts will be due at the editorial office six weeks later. The second review (if needed) will be completed within two months, and the accepted papers will be due at AGU one month later. Thus, from the deadline of submission until papers are due at AGU, the entire process should take no more than eight months, and publication date will be about one year after deadline of submission. This schedule is aimed at accommodating high-quality papers. Papers requiring extensive revisions are unlikely to catch-up in the review process and be part of the Special Section. However, if eventually accepted for publication, they will be published in a regular issue of the journal. The following sample can be used as a model for planning purposes:

- Deadline of submission: January 1, 2004
- First cycle of review completed: April 1, 2004
- Deadline for sending back revised manuscripts: May 15, 2004
- Second cycle of review completed: July 15, 2004
- Last version due (minor comments only): August 1, 2004
- Manuscripts due at AGU: September 1, 2004
- Expected publication date: December 27, 2004;

6. Submission of a list of manuscripts with full title and authors is requested and should be provided at the earliest possible time after the deadline for manuscript submission is set;

7. Special section manuscripts should not be held for one mailing, but instead should be submitted as they are ready for review. A manuscript received before the deadline of submission has a better chance to catch-up in the review process, especially if it requires a major revision.



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