EDITORIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF *PHYSICAL REVIEW E*

(Revised January 1997)

Physical Review E is published by The American Physical Society (APS), the Council of which has the final responsibility for the Journal. The Publications Oversight Committee of the APS and the Editor-in-Chief possess delegated responsibility for overall policy matters concerning all APS journals. The Editor of *Physical Review E*, who is appointed by the Council, is responsible for the scientific content and editorial matters relating to the journal. In this the Editor is assisted by the Journal's associate and assistant editors.

Editorial policy is guided by the following statement adopted in April, 1995 by the Council of the APS:

> It is the policy of The American Physical Society that the *Physical Review* accept for publication those manuscripts that significantly advance physics and have been found to be scientifically sound, important to the field, and in satisfactory form. The Society will implement this policy as fairly and efficiently as possible and without regard to national boundaries.

Physical Review E has an **Editorial Board** whose members are listed on the inside front cover of the Journal. Board members are appointed for three-year terms by the Editor-in-Chief upon recommendation of the Editor after consultation with appropriate APS divisions. Board members play an important role in the editorial management of the Journal. They lend advice on editorial policy and on specific papers for which special assistance is needed, participate in the formal appeals process (see section on Author Appeals), and give input on the selection of referees and the identification of new referees.

SUBJECT AREAS

The subtitle of *Physical Review E* is Statistical Physics, Plasmas, Fluids, and Related Interdisciplinary Topics. Papers in PRE are categorized into the following nine subsections:

(1) General methods of statistical physics
(2) Classical fluids
(3) Liquid crystals
(4) Complex fluids, diffusion-limited aggregation, and dendritic growth
(5) Biological physics
(6) Plasma physics
(7) Physics of beams
(8) Classical physics, including nonlinear media
(9) Computational physics

If a manuscript submitted to *Physical Review E* is on a topic not within its purview, but may be suitable for another *Physical Review* journal, the Editors will transfer the paper to the appropriate journal and inform the author(s) of that transfer.

CONTENT OF ARTICLES

Papers must contain **new results in physics**. Confirmation of previously published results of unusual importance can be considered as new, as can significant null results. Papers advancing new theoretical views on fundamental principles or theories must contain convincing arguments that the new predictions and interpretations are distinguishable from existing knowledge, at least in principle, and do not contradict established experimental results. Mathematical and computational papers that do not have application to physics are generally not suitable for *Physical Review E*. In general, authors should keep review material to a minimum. Even so, some review and reprise of past work is appropriate if the paper can be made more understandable and self-contained thereby.

Papers should be **clearly written** in good scientific English, in a style consistent with that of the Journal. (See General Information for Contributors, following.)

New terminology should be introduced only when clearly needed. It should be appropriate and, if possible, convey to the reader an accurate impression of its meaning. New terminology should not be frivolous, nor should it be introduced in titles. *Excessive use of acronyms is discouraged.*

Publication of ongoing work in a **series of papers** should be avoided. Instead, a single comprehensive article (perhaps preceded by a Letter or Rapid Communication) should be published. This policy against serial publication applies to Rapid Communications and Brief Reports as well as to regular articles.

Although there is no limit to the length of regular articles, the **appropriate length** depends on the extent of the information presented. *To enhance conciseness*, authors may refer to their own internal reports or theses that contain more detail than the published article, or they may deposit some of the material, especially long tables, in the Physics Auxiliary Publication Service (PAPS) of the American Institute of Physics. Information about PAPS can be obtained from the Editorial Office on request, via ftp to aps.org in the /pub/jrnls directory as the paps files (include filename suffix .asc, .ps, or .tex), or via the World Wide Web at the URL http://www.aip.org/epaps/index.html.

Authors should place their work in **context with the current state of research**, but they are not held responsible for ref-

erences to publications that had not yet appeared when their paper was submitted. Authors are not held responsible for references to preprints, internal reports, results that have been reported only orally at meetings (even though an abstract may have been printed), or for papers that have appeared in publications not abstracted in standard abstracting journals. If such work is called to the attention of the authors by a referee, however, they are encouraged (but not required) to refer to it. If revision of a manuscript takes a substantial time (several months), the references should be updated to include recently published relevant work. Authors are expected to include references to relevant books and to published conference proceedings that contain more than abstracts.

Papers that describe ***proposed experiments*** *fall into a special category. For such papers to be acceptable, the experiments must be demonstrated to be novel and feasible*. It is the author's responsibility to show that their proposal is likely to stimulate research that might not otherwise be undertaken.

Material **previously published** in a Letters journal, as a Rapid Communication, or in conference proceedings can be the basis of an article in *Physical Review E*, provided the submitted manuscript presents considerably more information, enabling the reader to obtain a substantially improved understanding of the subject. Figures, tables, and text material that have been published previously should be referenced, not repeated. Exceptions can be warranted by unusual circumstances.

SHORT PAPERS

Physical Review E publishes Articles, Rapid Communications, Brief Reports, and Comments. ***The scientific content of all sections of the Journal is judged by the same criteria***. The sections are distinguished by the different purposes for which the papers are intended.

Each paper must have an abstract. Short papers are limited to four printed pages; exceptions will be considered for Comments.

Rapid Communications in *Physical Review* are intended for the accelerated publication of important new results, as are *Physical Review Letters*. Authors may follow a Rapid Communication (or a Letter) with a more complete account as a regular article in *Physical Review*. The principal difference between *Physical Review Letters* and Rapid Communications is that Letters are aimed at a general audience of physicists and allied scientists, while Rapid Communications are primarily for a more specialized audience, i.e., the usual readers of a particular *Physical Review* journal (A, B, C, D, or E). Rapid Communications are given priority in editorial processing and production to minimize the time between receipt and publication. Therefore, *authors should justify the need for priority handling in their letter of submittal*. A series of Rapid Communications by one group on a particular subject is discouraged.

Page proofs of Rapid Communications are sent to authors; because of the accelerated publication schedule, authors are requested to transmit corrections by FAX, electronic mail, or telephone within 24 hours of receipt. Receipt of corrections from authors is generally required before publication unless, in the opinion of the Editors, excessive delays have occurred.

A **Brief Report** is an account of completed research that meets the usual *Physical Review* standards of scientific quality but is not appropriate for a regular article (or for the priority handling given to Rapid Communications). Announcements of planned research, progress reports, and preliminary results are generally not suitable for publication as Brief Reports. The normal publication schedule is followed.

Comments are publications that criticize or correct papers of other authors previously published in *Physical Review E*. Each Comment should contain an **abstract** and should state clearly the paper to which it refers. To be considered for publication, a Comment must be written in a collegial tone (free from polemics) and must be pertinent and without egregious errors. A Reply to a Comment must also conform to these requirements. *Editorial procedures for processing Comments are described in the following section.*

Errata are notices of errors or omissions in papers previously published in *Physical Review E*. Errata should be as brief as possible. An Erratum should contain a short statement of the correction(s) and, where appropriate, a description of any effects on the conclusions of the paper.

EDITORIAL PROCEDURES

Usually, *one* **referee** is selected by the Editor for each manuscript; there are exceptions, as with almost all procedural matters discussed below. Referee reports are advisory to the Editor(s). As a matter of practice, reports of referees are generally transmitted by the Editor(s) to the authors, but the Editor(s) may withhold or edit these reports for cause. If in the judgment of the Editor(s) a paper is clearly unsuitable for *Physical Review E, it will be rejected without review; authors of such papers have the same right to appeal as do other authors*.

Any resubmittal should be accompanied by a summary of the changes made, and a brief response to all recommendations and criticisms of the referee(s). This material will normally be forwarded to reviewers. If the authors wish to address some remarks solely to the editors, these should be clearly identified and separated from the summary and response.

A manuscript may be sent to additional referees if warranted,

either by request of the authors or by editorial decision. In most cases the new referee will be provided with previous correspondence on the manuscript, but not with the identity of the previous referee(s). Editorial Board members, however, may receive this information.

Since the referee is usually best qualified to judge a paper, the author should direct his or her responses to the items raised in the referee report. In general, very long rebuttal letters explaining contentious points in a manuscript should be avoided in favor of clarifying alterations in the manuscript itself.

Papers are accepted for publication based on favorable recommendations by the referee(s). On the other hand, the Editors can and will seek additional opinions when in their judgment such action seems called for. It is the policy of this journal that every effort be made to arrive at a decision on disposition within a reasonable time.

After acceptance of a manuscript, if further information that seems to warrant investigation is received, the Editors will regard it as an obligation to reconsider their decision.

Authors should state whether the paper they submit has been **previously considered for publication** in another APS journal *(Physical Review Letters*, other *Physical Review* journals, or *Reviews of Modern Physics*). It is the responsibility of the person submitting the paper to ensure that all persons listed as **authors approve of the inclusion of their names**.

Authors may request that particular individuals not be **chosen as referees**. Such requests are usually honored, although it is customary to give authors whose work is criticized in a manuscript an opportunity to respond to the criticism. Authors are welcome to submit a list of experts whom they consider especially suited to referee their paper. Such a list is particularly useful when a manuscript treats a highly specialized subject on which papers are infrequently published. The Editors, however, are not constrained to select a referee from that list.

Authors may request that their identities not be revealed to the referees **(‘‘double-blind’’ reviewing)**. If such a request is made, it is the authors’ responsibility to furnish a copy of the manuscript without the authors’ names, addresses, and the acknowledgment section.

The reviewing procedure for **Comments**, papers that criticize others’ work, is usually as follows:

(1) The paper is first sent to the author(s) whose work is being criticized. These author(s) act as reviewers (usually not anonymously) and should send a **report** suitable for transmittal to the author (not a Reply).

(2) After suitable exchanges between the involved parties, the Comment, along with relevant correspondence, is sent to an ‘‘uninvolved’’ referee for anonymous review. If this referee recommends acceptance of the paper, then the authors whose work is being commented on are given the opportunity to write a Reply for possible simultaneous publication. This Reply will also be reviewed (usually by the ‘‘uninvolved’’ referee).

(3) After the Comment and Reply have been accepted for publication, the author of the Comment is sent a copy of the Reply for his or her information. If further changes are made in the Comment, it may be subject to further review. The Comment and Reply usually are published in the same issue, with the Reply immediately following the Comment. If there is undue delay in the preparation and review of the Reply, the Comment may be published before the Reply. The normal publication schedule is followed.

AUTHOR APPEALS

Authors may appeal a rejection of their paper by the Editor(s). In the case of a formal appeal, the paper and all relevant information, including the identities of the referees, will be sent to a member of the Editorial Board. The Board member may review the case on the existing record or may seek additional expert opinion. The Board member will present a signed advisory opinion to the Editor(s).

If a Board member has provided a referee report on a paper prior to appeal, another Board member must review the paper on appeal. Authors may suggest those Board members they feel are appropriate (or not appropriate) to conduct the review, but the Editor(s) is (are) not bound by such suggestions. If there is no suitable Board member available, the Editor(s) may appoint an appropriate scientist to consider a paper under appeal as an *ad hoc* Board member.

The author of a paper that has been rejected subsequent to an Editorial Board review may request that the case be reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief of the APS. This request should be addressed to the Editor, who will forward the entire file to the Editor-in-Chief. Such an appeal must be based on the fairness of the procedures followed, and must not be a request for another scientific review. The question to be answered in this review is: Did the paper receive a fair hearing?

RECEIPT DATES

Each paper, when published, carries a receipt date indicating when the manuscript was first received by the Editors of *Physical Review E*.

If authors make substantive changes in a manuscript or if they hold it for an unusually long time after it has been returned to them with a referee’s report, the paper will be

given a ‘‘revised manuscript receipt date.’’ In such cases, the authors may be required to revise references to include material published since the original submission of the manuscript. In cases of especially lengthy delays the original paper is considered withdrawn, and the resubmitted version is considered to be a new paper and is given a new receipt date.

Papers transferred from *Physical Review Letters* or other *Physical Review* journals that are accepted without further review (and are not delayed unduly by the authors) will retain the original receipt date. In other cases a new receipt date, which is the date of transfer, will generally be given. However, the authors may request that the original receipt date be retained.

AUTHOR INQUIRIES

The Author Status Inquiry System provides information to authors regarding the status of their manuscripts automatically via electronic mail or the World Wide Web. Information on Comments and Replies is not included. Authors may send an electronic mail message to status@aps.org using as the subject line the manuscript code number followed by the last name of the first author (for example, EF1234 Jones). The body of the message should be empty (no human will read it). Alternatively, the system may be accessed via the Web URL http://publish.aps.org/STATUS/status.html.

Telephone inquiries regarding status are discouraged, since the interruption of normal office procedures can cause delays. In those cases when clarification of the information from the Author Status Inquiry System is needed, send an electronic mail message to pre@aps.org (with subject line, for example, Status EF1234 Jones).

The Editors welcome suggestions from authors and referees regarding improvements in editorial and refereeing procedures.

The Editors of *Physical Review E*