# *PHYSICAL REVIEW E*
# EDITORIAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES
(Revised July 2008)

*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 editors of *Physical Review E* are responsible for the scientific content and editorial matters relating to the journal.

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 appointed for three-year terms by the Editor-in-Chief upon recommendation of the editors, after consultation with APS divisions where appropriate. 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, Nonlinear, and Soft Matter Physics. PRE has two parts and fifteen subsections:

Part 1: Statistical, Soft Matter, and Biological Physics

- Statistical physics
- Equilibrium and linear transport properties of fluids
- Granular materials
- Colloidal dispersions, suspensions, and aggregates
- Structured and complex fluids
- Films, interfaces, and crystal growth
- Liquid crystals
- Polymers
- Biological Physics
  (`http://forms.aps.org/author/biophys-pre.pdf`)

Part 2: Nonlinear and Plasma Physics, Fluid Dynamics, and Related Topics

- Interdisciplinary physics
- Chaos and pattern formation
- Fluid dynamics
- Plasma physics
  (`http://forms.aps.org/author/plasma-pre.pdf`)
- Classical physics
- Computational physics
  (`http://forms.aps.org/author/compu-pre.pdf`)

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

The *Physical Review* and *Physical Review Letters* publish **new results**. Thus, prior publication of the same results generally will preclude consideration of a later paper.

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 a clear relationship 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. Special attention should be paid to **readability**, so as to render papers understandable to readers outside a narrow specialty. (See 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 information presented in the paper. Authors may refer in their paper 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 **Electronic Physics Auxiliary Publication Service (EPAPS)** of the American Institute of Physics. Files deposited in EPAPS are made freely available via ftp and the World Wide Web. As an electronic service, EPAPS can accommodate color-figure, multimedia, and program files. Information about EPAPS is available via the Authors, General Information subpage at `http://pre.aps.org/`, in the Manuscript Preparation section.

Readers benefit from complete referencing, which is necessary to place any work in the **context of the current state of research**. Authors should therefore make every effort to ensure that their citations of previously published work are comprehensive at the time of submission. This includes references to books and to published conference proceedings that contain more than abstracts. Authors should also add to the references any works published during the course of the review process.

It may also be necessary for authors to cite unpublished work, such as e-prints, preprints, internal reports, or results which have been reported only orally at meetings (even though an abstract may have been published). Unpublished work that appears during the review process may require citation as well. Unpublished work has not been fully vetted by the community, and considerable judgment on the part of the editors will be employed in determining the need to cite such work.

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 an abbreviated form (in a Letters journal, as a Rapid Communication, or in conference proceedings) may provide a useful basis for a more detailed article in the *Physical Review*. Such an article should present considerably more information and lead to a substantially improved understanding of the subject. Reproduction of figures, tables, and text material that have been published previously should be kept to a minimum and must be properly referenced. In order to reproduce figures, tables, etc., from another journal, authors must show that they have complied with the copyright requirements of the publisher of the other journal. Publication of material in a thesis does not preclude publication of appropriate parts of that material in the *Physical Review*.

## 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 journal pages; exceptions will be considered for Comments. For information on how to estimate length, see the information available on the Authors, General Information subpage at `http://pre.aps.org/`.

**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.

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. **Addenda** are included in the Brief Reports section.

**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.

The **Errata** section contains notices regarding errors or omissions in papers previously published. Besides the standard Erratum, several special categories of documents may appear in this section. In the online journal, each of these documents involve bidirectional links between the original article and the document in the Errata section. The category of the corrective document is indicated in its title and in the link from the original article.

The standard Erratum is a statement by the authors of the original paper that briefly describes the correction(s) and, where appropriate, any effects on the conclusions of the paper.

An Editorial Note is a statement by the journal about the paper that the editors feel should be brought to the attention of readers of the article.

A Publisher's Note is a notice that the article has been corrected subsequent to publication. Such corrections are made to correct typographical or production errors that involve significant metadata (such as title or byline) or have a significant impact on the reader's ability to understand the article. Such corrections are normally made only shortly after publication, with approval of APS management, and are not made for

scientific errors or omissions. The Publisher's Note indicates the correction and when it was made.

A Retraction is a notice that the paper should not be regarded as part of the scientific literature. Possible reasons for this include, among others, presentation of invalid results and inclusion of results that were published previously by the same authors in substantially similar form. (In the latter case, the prior publication, not the Retracted article, should be regarded as the source of the information.) To protect the integrity of the record, the retracted article is **not** removed from the online journal, but notice of Retraction is given. Retractions are sometimes published by the authors when they have discovered substantial scientific errors; in other cases, the editors conclude that Retraction is appropriate. In all cases, the Retraction indicates the reason for the action and who is responsible for the decision. If a Retraction is made without the unanimous agreement of the authors, the approval of the Editor-in-Chief of APS is required.

## EDITORIAL PROCEDURES

Usually, *one or more* **referees** are selected by the editors for each manuscript; there are exceptions, as with almost all procedural matters discussed below. Referee reports are advisory to the editors, but are generally transmitted by the editors to the authors, and so should be written in a collegial manner. The editors may withhold or edit these reports for cause. If in the judgment of the editors a paper is clearly unsuitable for *Physical Review E*, it will be rejected without external 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. This material will normally be forwarded to reviewers, and so should be written in a collegial manner. Remarks that authors wish to address solely to the editors should be clearly identified and separated from the summary and response. Authors should not send a version of the manuscript marked to show the changes, as this can lead to confusion and delay in processing.

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 any of the APS journals (*Physical Review Letters*, other *Physical Review* journals, or *Reviews of Modern Physics*) and supply the code number assigned by that journal. They should also provide information about other recent relevant unpublished work of theirs (e.g., for a paper under consideration by an APS journal, supply the code number; for one submitted to another journal, provide the title; for a paper deposited on an e-print server, supply the e-print number).

When a manuscript has several authors, one of them, the corresponding author, should be designated to receive and respond to correspondence from the editors. This designation can be changed upon notification of the editors. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author to represent all those involved with the work reported.

By submitting the manuscript, the corresponding author certifies:

- The paper represents original work of the listed authors.
- The manuscript as presented accurately reflects the scientific results.
- All of the authors made significant contributions to the concept, design, execution, or interpretation of the research study.
- All those who made significant contributions were offered the opportunity to be listed as authors.
- All of the listed authors are aware of and agree to the submission of this manuscript.
- The manuscript has not been published, and is not now and will not be under consideration by another journal while it is considered here.
- As part of the submission, the authors have provided any relevant information to the editors (e.g., information about recent relevant unpublished manuscripts by the authors).
- The authors accept the established procedures for selecting manuscripts for publication.

Authors may not present data and other results obtained by others as if they were their own. Nor may authors incorporate without attribution text from another work (by themselves or others), even when summarizing past results or background material. If a direct quotation is appropriate, the quotation should be clearly indicated as such and the original source should be properly cited. Papers that have been found to be in violation

of this rule will be rejected. In such cases, resubmission of the manuscript, even with the plagiarized text removed, is not ordinarily allowed. However, the editors may allow exceptions to this policy if warranted by special circumstances.

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 encouraged 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.

We are no longer able to accede to requests from authors that we withhold their identities from the referees. Such "double-blind" reviewing has been discontinued.

In some circumstances information about a manuscript considered by *Physical Review E* and subsequently submitted to another journal may be provided to the editor of that journal. Such information might include the comments and identities of referees.

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, but should not alter the Comment unless requested to do so by the editors. 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 editors. 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 an advisory opinion to the editors, which will be sent to authors and/or referees with the Board member's name.

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 editors are not bound by such suggestions. If there is no suitable Board member available, the editors 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 questions to be answered in this review are: Were our procedures followed appropriately and did the paper receive a fair hearing? A decision by the Editor-in-Chief is the final level of review.

## 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 (ASIS) provides information to authors regarding the status of their manuscripts automatically via the World Wide Web at the URL `http://authors.aps.org/STATUS/`. 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 ASIS is needed, send an electronic mail message to pre@aps.org (with subject line, for example, Status EF12345 Jones).

For papers that have been accepted for publication and sent to production, information about their status in the production process is available via a similar service maintained by the production vendor. A link to this service is provided by ASIS for such papers.

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