

Q: What does the Transparent Peer Review Record include?

A: It includes:

- A basic timeline of the peer review process
- A link to the preprint, if it's available
- All peer reviews, which are anonymous, unless reviewers choose to sign their reviews
- All substantive editorial decision letters (correspondence regarding formatting and similar technical details will be omitted)
- The author's point-by-point responses to reviewers
- At the editors' discretion, section called "Editor's View" which provides an overview of the editors' thinking about the manuscript and high-level context about the peer review process

Q: Are Transparent papers marked?

A: Yes. If the authors of a paper have chosen to make the Transparent Peer Review Record available, this will be stated clearly in the last sentence of the published paper's abstract.

Q: How can I access the Transparent Peer Review Record?

A: The Transparent Peer Review Record is part of the published paper's Supplemental Information. It can be downloaded just like any other part of the Supplement.

Q: Are Transparent Peer Review Records Open Access (OA)?

A: It depends. All *Cell Systems* authors can choose to make their papers OA. The Transparent Peer Review Record is part of the published paper. An author's choice to be OA applies to the whole paper, including the Transparent Peer Review Record.

Q: Why are you collecting demographic information about the authors of manuscripts submitted to *Cell Systems*? What information do I have to disclose about myself?

A: We're asking whether the choice to be transparent impacts all genders, career stages, and geographies equally. "Prefer not to say" is offered as a choice for the questions about gender and career stage; authors aren't obliged to share that information if they would rather not. Authors are obliged to share their geographic information though, because disclosing affiliation is an important part of avoiding conflicts of interest.

Q: Will *Cell Systems* still publish Peer Review articles?

A: Yes. You can read more about both efforts [here](#), although note that the linked blogpost is from 2018 and some aspects of it are out-of-date.

Q: Will *Cell Systems* always offer Transparent Peer Review?

A: It depends. As we've mentioned [here](#), if we find that transparency works against any specific demographic group, we will cease offering it. It's also important to us that the Transparent Peer Review Records are read. We assemble them by hand for each paper, and this takes time. If we find that very few people read them, we may decide that this time is put to better use. We'll talk about that decision with you before we make it.

Q: What happens if a Transparent paper is retracted?

A: The Transparent Peer Review Record will remain part of the retracted paper. An explanatory statement about the peer review process will be made as part of the retraction notice.

I'm an author...

Q: Do I have to participate in Transparent Peer Review?

A: The choice is yours. You can opt in or opt out when you submit your manuscript to *Cell Systems* for the first time.

Q: Can I change my mind about opting in or out?

A: Probably not. If you've opted out, you can't opt in later because we didn't get the reviewers' permission at the start of the process to use their reviews in this way. If you've opted in, we believe that choice should be binding through publication in essentially all cases. Rare exceptions can be made, however. If you think you need one, talk to your editor. In some of these cases, we may agree to keep the review process confidential but describe this decision within the Editor's View section of the Transparent Peer Review Record.

Q: Can I read the Editor's View before it's published?

A: Yes. You'll be able to read it and provide feedback, if you wish, at the Proof stage.

Q: Will participating in Transparent Peer Review change what I have to do as a *Cell Systems* author?

A: Just a very little bit. We ask you to include a final sentence of your abstract stating that the Transparent Peer Review Record is available. (*This doesn't count towards word limits!*)

Q: My paper was peer reviewed at another Cell Press journal before coming to *Cell Systems*, and I'd like *Cell Systems* to work with the reviews we received. Can I still participate in Transparent Peer Review in some way?

A: Yes. Although we won't be able to include the peer reviews within the Transparent Peer Review Record because we haven't obtained permission from the reviewers, we can state this clearly and provide a complete editorial record from *Cell Systems*.

Q: What happens to my Transparent Peer Reviews if *Cell Systems* rejects my manuscript but suggests that I continue to work on it with another Cell Press journal, like *Cell Reports* or *iScience*?

A: Currently, *Cell Systems* is the only journal at Cell Press to offer Transparent Peer Review. If we reject a manuscript, the reviews can follow the paper to our sister journal if you'd like (this is optional), but they will no longer be made transparently available. If this situation changes, these FAQs will be updated.

I'm a reviewer...

Q: Do I have to participate in Transparent Peer Review?

A: No. When we invite you to review a manuscript, we'll tell you if the manuscript's authors have opted in. If you don't wish to participate, you can decline our invitation to review. In this case, please drop us an email to let us know this is why you're declining. If you feel strongly that you'd like to review the manuscript, but you feel equally strongly that your comments should remain confidential, we can specifically redact your comments within the Transparent Peer Review Record. However, it's likely that reference will be made to your comments by other people participating in the peer review process, and we won't redact those statements. If you feel you fall into this second category, please email us.

Q: Will my name be associated with the review?

A: Only if you choose to sign your review! If you don't specifically sign your review, your identity will remain confidential. You're welcome to sign your reviews any time before we officially accept the paper.

Q: Can I still provide confidential feedback to the editor?

A: Yes. However, if we think that your confidential comments have contributed to our decisions in important ways, we may ask you if we can quote from them within the Editor's View. We will always ask for your permission to quote from these comments and you are always welcome to say no. If you say no, we will respect your wishes.

Q: What happens if a manuscript I review is rejected from *Cell Systems* but published at another Cell Press journal?

A: Currently, *Cell Systems* is the only journal at Cell Press to offer Transparent Peer Review. If we formally reject a manuscript but the authors and editors all think that it's better suited to another Cell Press journal (e.g. *Cell Reports* or *iScience*), the reviews can follow the paper to our sister journal if that is what the authors wish, but in that case, they will no longer be made transparently available. If this situation changes, these FAQs will be updated.