

Following Rejection: A Checklist for Moving On

- Call your best friend or most supportive colleague. Complain about rejection.
- Note in your journal profile the main points of the critique.
- If you did not receive specific comments or feedback, contact the journal to request more information regarding your rejection. Make it clear that you are not asking for a second review, but rather than you want constructive critique to help you improve the current paper as well as any future submissions.
- Pick up your manuscript. Highlight with one color the places where you received contradictory advice or feedback. Highlight with another color the places where you received consistent advice or feedback.
- Review areas of consistent advice. Do you agree with the criticism? If so, begin notes on how to address those comments. If not, write a brief statement explaining your counter-arguments. Do not try to make the changes yet, but simply articulate for yourself why you think the feedback is misguided or inaccurate. Eventually, if and when you do a full revision, you will need to be able to overcome these criticisms through revisions to the paper.
- Review areas of contradictory advice. Contradictory advice usually means that *something* isn't working, although reviewers may differ on their advice as to how to fix it. Do a bit of brainstorming to try to uncover the foundational issues. Are you missing a piece of research? Have you organized the section properly to guide readers through your ideas? Have you inadvertently created a fallacy or other logic problem?
- Review the entire pile of manuscript and notes. Ask yourself: Is it worth my time to continue developing this paper, or have I reached the limits of its potential? Write out pros and cons of researching new journals, revising, and re-submitting, versus moving on to something else.
- If you opt to revise and submit somewhere else, don't delay: Get to it!
- If you opt to move on, file your materials so that you can recover them if you choose.
- Call your best friend or most supportive colleague. Share a laugh over the foibles of scholarship.