

# SARA Template for Reviewing Articles

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## General guidelines

### Constructive criticism

The review should help the authors to improve their work (upon revision of their paper, for instance) by providing constructive comments and clearly formulated suggestions. There is always a way to be courteous when providing criticism; this need for courtesy is especially important in SARA's submission environment where there are many first time authors. The same criticism can become constructive and courteous with some simple choice of words and examples.

For example:

Simple criticism

The methodology is wrong.

Constructive and courteous criticism

In the opinion of the reviewer, there are some specific invalid assumptions which pose problems with the described methodology. These invalid assumptions are enumerated below.

A review is not the place to:

Display the great knowledge, cleverness or personality of the reviewer

Fuel a debate regarding whether any given field of study is interesting or not

Take revenge for any personal or professional prejudice, real or imagined, whether or not it was caused by one of the authors

When addressing criticisms to the authors of the manuscript, it is important to remain constructive, polite and as anonymous as possible. A reviewer should feel almost comfortable enough to defend her opinion in person.

### More detailed reference for reviewing

The SARA general guidelines for reviewing are here

[http://sara.etsmtl.ca/en/reviewing\\_guide/](http://sara.etsmtl.ca/en/reviewing_guide/)

Note that the general guidelines on the SARA site suggest a competency of the reviewer in the domain of the article. For the purposes of SARA reviewing at ÉTS where there is always some shared competency as we are all engineers, you may choose to review an article which is not in your specific

field and make more general comments based on the logic and readability of the article. Templates for reviewing are below.

## The article is in your field

### Summary

#### Factual summary

- briefly and neutrally describe the contents of the paper
  - o the context and specific problems addressed
  - o the main contributions (according to the authors)
  - o the methods used
  - o the results obtained
  - o the conclusions drawn

#### Critical summary

- strengths
  - o The paper tackles a particularly difficult, novel and/or important problem
  - o The paper proposes particularly novel methods
  - o The paper presents highly interesting or surprising results, or results that are full of practical implications
  - o The paper describes rigorous experimentation and/or analysis of the results
  - o The paper is very clearly written
  - o The paper presents a very thorough and useful review of the literature
- Weaknesses
  - o The paper tackles a problem that is no longer relevant
  - o The paper proposes methods that represent only a small increment over previous work
  - o The results presented in the manuscript are not very convincing
  - o There are errors or gaps in the proposed methods, the experimental methodology or the analysis of the results
  - o The manuscript is difficult to read or poorly structure
  - o The paper does not refer sufficiently to the state-of-the-art

### Detailed list of comments

The list should clearly identify and detail **each problematic point**

- Refer to the page, section or figure number where the problem occurs whenever possible
- Identify the problem and explain why it is a problem
- Ask specific questions if the manuscript was not sufficiently clear
- Suggest corrective measures when possible

The list should also identify and detail **points of strength**

## Conclusion

Conclude with at least a one sentence statement of your overall impression of the article. This sentence can include a recommendation of acceptance / rejection; in the case of SARA, it might be better to state whether major or minor work is needed to the manuscript before submitting the article to a conference or journal.

## The article is outside your field

### Guidelines

When reviewing an article that is not in your field – it is best to focus on whether the communication of the ideas presented was effective. Even if you are not in the field you are still an informed reader, and there is a lot of useful feedback you can give about clarity, logic, structure, language, etc. If there are technical aspects of the paper (beyond communication of ideas) for which you feel competent in assessing – you can use relevant points of the template above (article is in your field) in addition to the template below (article is outside your field). When the article is outside your field, make a statement letting the authors know that your review will concentrate on the clarity and communication of the ideas presented as the topic is not your main field of concentration.

### Summary

#### Factual summary

- briefly and neutrally describe the contents of the paper
  - o the context and specific problems addressed
  - o the main contributions (according to the authors)
  - o the methods used
  - o the results obtained
  - o the conclusions drawn

#### Critical summary about clarity

- The paper should clearly mention
  - o The context for the research and the research question
  - o The research objectives and the main contributions of the research
  - o The main steps of the Methods used (experimental protocol, methods used for data analysis, etc.)
  - o The main experimental findings (results) and conclusions
  - o The paper should also clearly state what is original and innovative in the work.

See if the above points are easily discernable and understandable; make comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the manner in which they are presented.

#### Detailed list of comments – if possible

The list should clearly identify and detail **each problematic point**

- Refer to the page, section or figure number where the problem occurs whenever possible
- Identify the problem and explain why it is a problem
- Ask specific questions if the manuscript was not sufficiently clear
- Suggest corrective measures when possible

The list should also identify and detail **points of strength**

## **Conclusion**

Conclude with at least a one sentence statement of your overall impression of the clarity of the article. This sentence can include a recommendation of acceptance / rejection; in the case of SARA, it might be better to state whether major or minor work is needed to the manuscript before submitting the article to a conference or journal.