A HOW-TO GUIDE

Thank you for joining, and welcome to the Frontiers for Young Minds community of Science Mentors. Please, take 15 minutes to learn about Frontiers for Young Minds and your role by reading these guidelines. Science Mentors introduce their Young Reviewers to the concept of peer review, assist them in navigating a cutting-edge science manuscript, and empower them as young experts to provide feedback to authors about communicating science to their peers.

You are always welcome to contact our Editorial Office at kids@frontiersin.org – we are here to help you to make this journal a success. We would also be happy to arrange a phone call with you to go through these guidelines.
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1. **ABOUT FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS**

Frontiers for Young Minds is a non-profit scientific journal for which young people serve not only as the target audience, but also as critical participants in the review of manuscripts written by expert researchers. We connect 8-15 year olds directly with leading scientists to provide feedback on articles about cutting-edge discoveries. The end result is a journal of freely available scientific articles that are written by leading scientists and shaped for younger audiences by the input of their own peers. As of the end of 2014, some of the best articles are highlighted in a co-branded blog that we are running with Scientific American. The quality of Frontiers for Young Minds was recognized as one of the American Library Association’s 2014 ‘Great Websites for Kids.’

1.1 **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

1. **Our Editorial board identifies** recent discoveries that are of potential interest to a younger audience. These can be articles published by Frontiers or other publishers.

2. **The scientists behind the original research** write an article that puts the work in a broader context and is targeted to a younger audience. This new article is then submitted to Frontiers for Young Minds - free of charge. (Scientists also have the option of providing a review article of a fundamental concept in their discipline targeted for a younger audience.)

3. **A Frontiers Associate Editor** then manages the peer review process and matches the article with one of our Young Minds - or a classroom of Young Minds - and a Science Mentor who review the article together to suggest relevant revisions.

4. **Once the review process is completed,** the article is then validated by the Associate Editor and forwarded to the Frontiers’ office for production where it is typeset for online and printable versions.

5. **The finished article** is published and made freely available on our website alongside the reviewers’ names. We protect the identities of our young reviewers and only publish their first names.

1.2 **FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS EDITORIAL BOARDS**

The Editorial board is comprised of 5 distinct roles, whose responsibilities are divided as follows:

- **The Field Chief Editor** oversees the entire journal and acts in collaboration with the Editorial Office to assist and guide the Specialty Chief Editors.

- **The Specialty Chief Editors (SCEs)** oversee the individual journal specialties. The SCEs also appoint 15-20 Associate Editors for their own specialty.

- **The Associate Editors** act as handling Editors for submitted manuscripts, accepting them for publication following peer-review, or recommending rejection to the SCEs. Associate Editors also invite Science Mentors to the editorial board.

- **The Science Mentors** guide the Young Minds through the review process, serving as a direct connection to the scientific community. They are also responsible for maintaining a pool of Young Reviewers, who can review manuscripts as they are submitted.

- **The Young Minds Reviewers** are 8-15 year of age and can be individuals, classrooms, or afterschool programs. They act as referees for manuscripts, with the guidance of their Science Mentor.
2. YOUR ROLE AS SCIENCE MENTOR

2.1 ROLE WITHIN THE JOURNAL

The success of the journal depends on the active involvement of our Science Mentors - not only on the day of the review, but also in their planning to make sure that the young people involved get the most out of the experience. While the Young Reviewers are the primary sources of feedback for the manuscript itself, the Science Mentors coordinate with educators to help the Young Reviewers understand the scientific process, peer review, and how to approach an article with a critical eye for feedback. It is often an extremely rewarding experience both for the kid reviewers and for the Science Mentors themselves.

As Science Mentor, you will be responsible for the following:

- Completing your Loop profile, which will provide access to the Frontiers platform and serve as a reference for both your Associate Editor and collaborators regarding your expertise, biography, and publication history
- Identifying a classroom, student group, museum, or after-school program as your Young Reviewers
- Keeping your Associate Editor informed with regards to the needs, age group, and availability of your Young Reviewers
- Coordinating with the educator to schedule, prepare, execute, and follow up on the review event
- Inputting Young Reviewer feedback into the Frontiers platform for the interactive review process (described more in depth below).
- Sending the Young Reviewer biography materials and avatar to the Frontiers office to be included on the published article. You can find them in the “Important Documents” section at the end of these guidelines. Please email them to kids@frontiersin.org.
- Ensuring that author revisions meet the needs and concerns of the Young Reviewers

** As part of the integration of Frontiers for Young Minds into the Frontiers review platform, Science Mentors are still referred to as “Reviewers” or “Review Editors” within the forum (a term from Frontiers’ academic titles). Please note that while email messages will differentiate between your role as a Science Mentor, within the review platform your role will be referred to as “Review Editor”. If you have any questions, please contact kids@frontiersin.org **

2.2 CREATING A LOOP PROFILE

Please take a minute to register for Loop via the Frontiers website and complete your biography, including keywords and confirming your publications. You can do this at www.frontiersin.org. This will give you access to our review forum, and also allow the Young Minds to see who the scientists behind the journal are!

The keywords and publications you enter will also serve as an important reference for the Chief Editor regarding the composition of their board of mentors.

2.3 IDENTIFYING YOUNG REVIEWERS

There are a number of options for working with Young Reviewers – with most mentors collaborating with classrooms, museums, student groups, or after-school programs. This allows the students to work together and have an active discussion during the review, but
also gives the mentor the opportunity to introduce themselves and their experiences as a scientist to the whole group. Whatever the group, one of the keys to ensuring an engaged and well-managed review is to work with the supervising educators in advance.

If your department or University already has an active outreach program, it is likely that they already have a working relationship with one of the schools in your area. It is usually best to check with them first and take advantage of any experience they have in setting up a classroom event with a local educator or program. You may also reach out to a school yourself and try to identify an educator or program who would be excited about having this kind of activity.

One-on-one reviews are less common and typically require significant coordination with interested kid reviewers who contact us directly. We are working towards a more scalable approach for such reviews in the future.

** Please inform the Associate Editor who recruited you as soon as you have Young Reviewer(s) interested in working with you on a review. Please provide any details you have on the age group, school/program, and possible timeline. The Associate Editor will take note of this information and let you know when there is a manuscript available for the review. Depending on the number of available manuscripts, this timeline can vary. **

### 2.4 PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW EVENT

While the primary responsibility for the Science Mentor occurs on the day of the review event, the preparation and coordination before and after can have a significant effect on the experience and lasting impact for the Young Reviewers involved.

**SCHEDULING THE EVENT**

The review event should ideally take place within 30 days of receiving the manuscript. If you cannot perform the review event within this time frame, please inform the Associate Editor handling the manuscript, who may choose to find another Science Mentor to assist in the review of the manuscript.

If you will be able to perform the review event within 30 days, please inform the editorial office when the review event will take place at kids@frontiersin.org. This will allow us to follow up with you accordingly regarding your review event.

**COLLABORATE WITH THE EDUCATOR**

Whether for a classroom, museum, or after-school program, the educator who regularly works with the students is an invaluable resource. As much as possible, determine the content that the class or program will be covering leading up to the review event. It may also be useful to meet with the educator after you have both read the manuscript. The educator may be able to help you pinpoint areas of the manuscript that may be particularly difficult for the students, and help you brainstorm ways of clarifying these sections for them.

Determine whether it would be possible to either observe or interact with the group ahead of time. Learn as much as you can about the ages, learning limitations, classroom resources, and known motivators for the Young Reviewers you will be working with. Always respect the
time – as much or as little as it may be – that the educator may have available for the event and think about ways to make the most out of the experience given those limitations. One of the key factors for a productive review event is ensuring that as many of the Young Reviewers as possible have read the manuscript before the day of the event.

GET TO KNOW YOUR YOUNG REVIEWERS

Depending on the limitations of the group you will be working with, it may or may not be possible to meet with the students in advance (either in person or virtually). At minimum, try to get to know the needs and interests of the group from the educator. Some suggestions could include:

- Reading level
- Size of group
- Career ambitions
- Socio-economic background
- Recently learned science content
- Current events or pop culture of particular interest to the group
- Motivation for participation (mandatory, elective, etc)
- Comfort level with working in groups, speaking in front of class
- Writing level
- Things they may have in common with you

If it will not be possible to learn about the group in advance, consider planning a small activity that will help you get to know them (as time allows).

** Note that a long distance review is possible, for example via Skype. However, in these cases please make an extra effort to do a ‘pre-visit’ to the Young Reviewer(s) and coordinate with the Teacher or Guardian, in order to prevent appearing too distant. Despite the potential constraints of a long distance Science Mentor, we have found this is indeed a good way to get Science Mentors into classrooms that might be otherwise more isolated (e.g. rural classrooms). **

GET TO KNOW YOUR MANUSCRIPT

As the Science Mentor, you will be the primary resource for both the educator and Young Reviewers trying to understand and provide feedback on the manuscript. The manuscript will likely fall outside of your direct area of expertise, and some basic background research may help in fielding questions and guiding discussions. In particular there may be types of figures that the Young Reviewers have never encountered before, and you may need to explain how to read them and why researchers use figures to convey information about their research. If you feel that a particular figure is too complicated or advanced for the target audience, be sure to get the feedback from the Young Reviewers directly to provide to the authors.

There are also likely to be words that are unfamiliar for the Young Reviewers. Depending on the time available to the educator, they may have already been able to help the students with this, but you are likely to also be answering questions of this nature. You should take into consideration the feedback of the Young Minds, as well as of the educator. If the vocabulary is too complex, provide this feedback to the authors, in order to help ensure that the published manuscript will be at the
correct level. Bear in mind that while Frontiers for Young Minds are not currently grouped by age on the website, we do hope to do this in the future. The input from the Young Reviewers regarding the vocabulary and complexity relative to their own age group (better for younger, better for older, just right) is a valuable resource for the journal to provide clarification for readers in the future.

FIND PIECES TO MOTIVATE INTERACTION AND DISCUSSION

Based on what you learn about your Young Reviewers as well as the manuscript, look for opportunities to motivate the group to get excited and involved with the material. Depending on the group of Young Reviewers and the educator, the best approach for this may vary significantly. Tools that motivate the Young Reviewers to fully read and engage with the manuscript BEFORE the day of the review event are a great advantage. Consider some options below, but collaborate with the educator on ideas whenever possible:

BEFORE EVENT (to bring with them)
- Ask Young Reviewers to name two things in the manuscript that they already knew and two things that they learned by reading it
- You provide 2-5 questions about the figures in the manuscript to be answered in advance, or ask the students to bring questions that they have about the figures
- Ask Young Reviewers to each provide a 1-2 sentence summary of the main finding or point of the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to bring 1-2 questions that they would want to ask the researcher who wrote the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to bring 1-2 suggestions about what would have made the manuscript easier to understand / more exciting for them personally
- Ask each Young Reviewer to identify one point they found the most interesting and one they found the most confusing in the way it was communicated

DURING EVENT
- Ask Young Reviewers to propose questions that they would want to ask another student to determine if that other student understood the main idea of the manuscript
- Young Reviewers can work in small groups to propose another research question they would like to have answered based on what they learned from this manuscript
- Young Reviewers in small groups can focus on different aspects / sections of the manuscript
- Ask Young Reviewers to suggest new phrasings for particularly confusing sentences
- Have Young Reviewers volunteer to be the scribe for each question from the questionnaire and summarize final feedback from their group
- Have Young Reviewers propose and then vote on the top 3 questions they would like to ask authors

GET TO KNOW THE BASICS ABOUT CLASSROOM / SCIENCE OUTREACH

Communicating science to younger audiences and getting groups excited to participate in outreach activities takes practice and preparation. No matter your level of experience, there are materials that can help you to prepare. Consider the resources below:

- This article, published in the journal BioScience, is a true academic’s guide to outreach, including figures and a comprehensive list of references. The article covers topics including motivations for outreach, inquiry-based learning, and tips for classroom interactions. http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/65/3/313
• The American Astronomical Society has put together an enormous list of resources for classroom outreach. Particularly helpful here might be the ideas of places to find Young Minds. https://aas.org/outreach/moose-menu-outreach-opportunities-science-education#iia

• The American Society for Microbiology has put together a list of links which provide tips for interacting in a classroom environment. http://www.nationalacademies.org/rise/roles1a.htm

• The National Academy of Sciences has put together a list of things to consider when entering a classroom, including tips on presenting and a breakdown of what different age groups are ready to take on in classroom activities. This is a quick read, and may be a good place to start if you have limited time before your first review event. http://www.nationalacademies.org/rise/roles1a.htm

2.5 YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR YOUNG REVIEWERS

The content in this section is meant to provide an introduction to your role and relationship with the Young Reviewers. The intent is not to have all of this content included at once as a formal presentation, but to be included and integrated throughout as best fits the time that you have with the group. Remember that new concepts will be better understood if they are repeated or tied to specific experiences.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

When you introduce yourself to the Young Reviewers, you are also providing a direct connection to the world of research. Consider the following aspects as options when preparing your introduction:

• Your name and where you are from
• What kind of scientist you are/type of research you do (in very plain terms)?
• What made you want to do research? What experience/person inspired you the most?
• What do you have in common with your Young Reviewers?
• Was there a time when you did not think you would like science, but changed your mind?
• What you plan to do with them during the review event?

INTRODUCING PEER REVIEW

Most people outside of the research community are not familiar with the ideas of scientific publishing or peer review. Science curriculum or outreach activities often end at the moment of discovery or experimental design. Very little is ever conveyed about the role or importance of being able to communicate scientific findings in a clear, accurate, and interesting way.

• Why is it important for a scientist to be a good communicator?
• Why do scientists write down details about their work during the research?
• Why do scientists write down details about their work after the research?
• Why is it important for other experts to read the work of other researchers and provide feedback BEFORE something is published (peer review)?
• What is a scientist thinking when they read someone else’s work? (Thinking of potential questions, not just trying to memorize the content)
• How are the Young Reviewers in the group the experts needed for this manuscript, and why is their honest feedback so important?
** This is a chance to get the Young Reviewers to understand that they are the experts for the target audience of these articles, and to encourage them to read about cutting-edge science with an attitude for asking questions rather than memorization. **

**EMPOWERING YOUNG REVIEWERS TO TAKE THE LEAD**

Remember that one of your key goals is to empower the Young Minds themselves to take a lead on the feedback that is provided. You will have a chance to compile your thoughts and input as well for the authors and Editor, but as much of the actual feedback (including quotes) from the Young Minds should be included in the review questionnaire and comments as possible. The questions on the review questionnaire are meant to serve as a starting point, to ensure that the authors have the input necessary to improve their manuscripts. However it is important to remain flexible to guiding the conversation based on the response and interests of the Young Reviewers. You can download the Review questionnaire in the “Editors and Reviewers” tab on the Frontiers for Young Minds website (see section 2.6 below). Depending on age group, you can even ask for student volunteers to keep notes on the board for parts of discussion, or write up group response to particular questions.

2.6 **OBTAINING MATERIALS FOR THE REVIEW EVENT**

You can find all of the materials that you might need for the review on our website. You will first need to navigate to [http://kids.frontiersin.org/](http://kids.frontiersin.org/) and log into your Loop account (1). Click on the “About” icon on the top of the page (2), then click on “Editors and Mentors” (3). If you are logged into your account, you will then have a link below the heading “Science Mentors” (4) to access supplementary material.

Here you will find:

- the review questionnaire which will help guide you through the review event. Responses to this will be uploaded directly into the Review Forum;
- the Young Reviewer profile forms (one for individual reviewers, and one for classrooms), which should be sent back to kids@frontiersin.org along with a corresponding avatar.
- guidelines for a classroom review which can be shared with the educator and
- a short document to explain to the Young Minds what their role is.
3. **THE FRONTIERS FOR YOUNG MINDS REVIEW PROCESS**

3.1 **SUBMISSION AND INITIAL EVALUATION**

Following manuscript submission, the Specialty Chief Editor will perform a preliminary content check of the manuscript, to ensure that the content is suitable for the young audience. The Specialty Chief Editor may either decide to send the manuscript out for review or recommend it for immediate rejection.

After a preliminary content check, the Specialty Chief Editor will appoint an Associate Editor to act as a handling editor for the manuscript. This Associate Editor should also perform a preliminary content check, to make sure that the manuscript is ready for review by the Young Reviewers. Once the article is ready to be reviewed, the Associate Editor will invite a Science Mentor- Young Mind pair to perform the review, and oversee the review process.

**With the initial checks performed by the Specialty Chief Editor and you as the Associate Editor, the review process seeks to identify manuscript that may need to be rejected as early as possible in the process. This is out of consideration for the Young Reviewers who would work on a manuscript, but then not have the chance to appear on a published article for their work. If you believe that there is a problem that would prevent the publication of an article, please contact the Associate Editor directly, before moving forward with the review.**

3.2 **ASSIGNMENT OF A SCIENCE MENTOR- YOUNG REVIEWER PAIR**

The Associate Editor will invite a Science Mentor via the Frontiers platform and you will receive an email notifying you of this invitation. You may accept or decline this invitation by clicking on the links in this email. You will need to answer some basic questions before you can accept the assignment. Please note that this questionnaire has not been modified for Frontiers for Young Minds and is the questionnaire for all Frontiers journals. To this regard, question number four asks if the manuscript is within your area of expertise. Please note that for Frontiers for Young Minds, while you should have a basic understanding of the content, you do not need to be more than basically specialized in the area of the manuscript.

**Note: As part of the integration of Frontiers for Young Minds into the Frontiers review platform, Science Mentors are still referred to as “Reviewers” or “Review Editors” within the forum. Please note that while email messages will differentiate between you as the Science Mentor and the Young Reviewers, within the review platform your role will be referred to as Review Editor. If you have any questions, please contact kids@frontiersin.org**
3.3 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PHASE

**Note: What is called the independent review phase in the online platform is the “classroom review” that you will be performing with your Young Minds.**

There is a standard review questionnaire which should be followed. However please feel free to modify the format of the review, and work with teachers and parents to make sure that the review is as engaging for the students as possible.

ACCESSING REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

Your review assignments are displayed on the right hand side of your Loop homepage. The title of the manuscript and the status of your review will appear under the “Your Review Assignments” heading. They may also be accessed by selecting Frontiers > My Review Assignments.

The image below shows the review forum. On the right hand side of the review forum, you will find options to:

- Download the latest version of the manuscript;
- Access all related files;
- Withdraw from the process, should you not have time to continue the review, should there be a conflict of interest, or if you find any objective error in the manuscript and would like to recommend it for rejection to the handling Associate Editor. Please contact kids@frontiersin.org if you feel that it will become necessary to withdraw from the review or recommend the manuscript for rejection.
The review event should ideally take place within 30 days of receiving the manuscript. If you cannot perform the review event within this time frame, please inform the Associate Editor handling the manuscript, who may choose to find another Science Mentor to assist in the review of the manuscript.

If you will be able to perform the review event within 30 days, please inform the editorial office when the review event will take place at kids@frontiersin.org. This will allow us to follow up with you accordingly regarding your review event.

Once the Young Reviewer feedback and your comments have been compiled into the Review Questionnaire, visit the review forum and fill out the relevant boxes (see screenshot below). You may select the “Save and Resume Later” (1) option at any stage, should you still be drafting. Once the review report is ready, simply press “Submit My Report” at the top (2), so that all comments may be sent to the handling Associate Editor. If needed, you can still make changes to your report after it has been submitted up until the interactive review forum has been activated by the handling Editor.
The Associate Editor is automatically notified as soon as you submit the review report. The Associate Editor is then responsible for activating the next phase of the review, i.e. the interactive review forum. Even if the comments are unfavorable to the authors, the interactive review forum must be activated and the authors allowed the opportunity of rebuttal; this is a fundamental Frontiers principle.

** After the review event has taken place, please make sure that you send the Reviewer profile form, and the Reviewer avatar to the editorial office at kids@frontiersin.org **

### 3.4 THE INTERACTIVE REVIEW FORUM

Once the interactive review process is activated, authors are immediately notified to enter the Frontiers review forum, where they are able to view the review comments, and have up to 35 days to prepare responses and/or a revised manuscript resubmission, if necessary. Authors may reply to the Young Reviewers through real-time comments in the discussion
As the Science Mentor, you are responsible for making sure that all of the concerns raised by the Young Reviewers have been addressed by the authors. The authors will often address the Young Minds questions directly, and we encourage you to share these responses with your Young Minds, if possible. The Associate Editor monitors the discussions occurring between authors and referees within this forum. He or she ensures not only that the participants’ interaction unfolds in a timely manner, but that it is also constructive.

Should a dispute arise, the Associate Editor will act as a mediator, working with all parties involved to resolve the issue. The review is complete once all issues/comments are addressed. As the Science Mentor, you are responsible for making sure that all concerns raised by the Young Reviewers are addressed by the authors and endorsing the manuscript when you feel that this is the case.
3.5 **ARTICLE ACCEPTANCE/REJECTION**

If you are satisfied with the authors' efforts at amending the manuscript, you will be asked to endorse publication (1). This automatically notifies the Associate Editor, who can accept the final version of the manuscript. The first name of the Young Reviewer, or name of the classroom appears on the final manuscript. Note that we protect the identities of our young reviewers and only publish their first names. Similarly, for the protection of our Young Reviewers, the Science Mentors are not acknowledged on the final publication, but rather acknowledged separately from their Young Minds, in a separate list on the website.

Should you not wish to endorse publication, you will be able to withdraw from the review. Please contact the editorial office before doing so at kids@frontiersin.org.

**With the initial checks performed by the Specialty Chief Editor and you as the Associate Editor, the review process seeks to identify manuscript that may need to be rejected as early as possible in the process. This is out of consideration for the Young Reviewers who would work on a manuscript, but then not have the chance to appear on a published article for their work.**
### 3.6 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

When accepting a review invitation, you are requested to confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest (see details below).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>1. Are any of the authors a spouse or significant other, a member of the same family or a very close personal friend? Science Mentor should also not be a member of the same family as the handling editor.</th>
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<td>COLLABORATIONS</td>
<td>2. Are you currently hosting or have hosted a Frontiers Research Topic with the editor or any of the authors within the past 2 years?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated on a research project or a publication with any of the authors within the past 2 years?</td>
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<td>4. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as an advisor or in any other direct supervisory capacity in the past five years?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Are you currently collaborating or have you collaborated with any of the authors as a student or in any other direct subordinate capacity in the past five years?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Note: Review Editors should not accept assignments if they have a close professional relationship with the handling editor, which in their view could affect the objectivity of the review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
<td>6. Should a Topic Editor be listed as an author on a submission, the manuscript will need to be handled by an Associate Editor from the board. [...]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Are you a current member of a committee or department that coincides with an affiliation with the editor or any of the authors?</td>
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<td>FINANCIAL</td>
<td>8. Do you have a business or professional partnership with any author?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Do you have financial interests or business relations with any organization involved in this research or in the preparation of the manuscript?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Do you have any financial interest in the content of the manuscript that might affect your ability to perform an objective review?</td>
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Actual or potential conflicts of interest must be reported both to the journal’s Editorial Office and to the handling Associate Editor of the manuscript.
In case of doubt, please contact the Frontiers for Young Minds Editorial Office at kids@frontiersin.org.
4 FOLLOWING UP

Following up with the Young Reviewers
It is not required that you follow up with the Young Reviewers or educator after the review event or publication, however you are welcome to do so. We especially encourage you to share any feedback that the authors may have provided directly to the Young Minds, as this is a unique opportunity for the Young Minds to interact with a scientist, and have their questions and concerns addressed directly.
You may also wish to ask for feedback from the educator, as they may be able to provide constructive criticism, and tips for your next review.

Following up with Frontiers for Young Minds
Frontiers for Young Minds is constantly seeking to improve our process and the impact of the review process for those involved. If you would be willing to provide feedback about your experience or the process itself, please contact us at kids@frontiersin.org.