

Managing Stakeholder Feedback: Lessons from Experience

August 2022

Stephanie M. Morrison, MPH
Writer-Editor

Office of Communications and Public Liaison
National Institute on Aging
National Institutes of Health

Pros and cons of stakeholder feedback

+ Helpful feedback can...	- But suggestions may...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure consistency with agency policy and style• Validate accuracy and currency• Identify missing information• Improve clarity and focus• Provide credibility• Build relationships• Identify issues early	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to request and incorporate• Require follow-up• Be out of scope• Use jargon or technical language• Contradict one another• Need tools to manage

Stakeholders include anyone who reviews your materials and has a say in its style or content.

Success factors

Practical

- Effective copy
- Plain writing
- Version control

Interpersonal

- Relationship-building
- Clear communication
- Diplomacy

Types of reviewers: Gatekeepers and SMEs



Getting prepared

- Choose the best stage to ask for input
- List everyone who needs to review
- Determine what feedback would be most helpful
- Clarify the scope of the review
- Consider your timeline and deadlines
- Think about the best way to contact reviewers

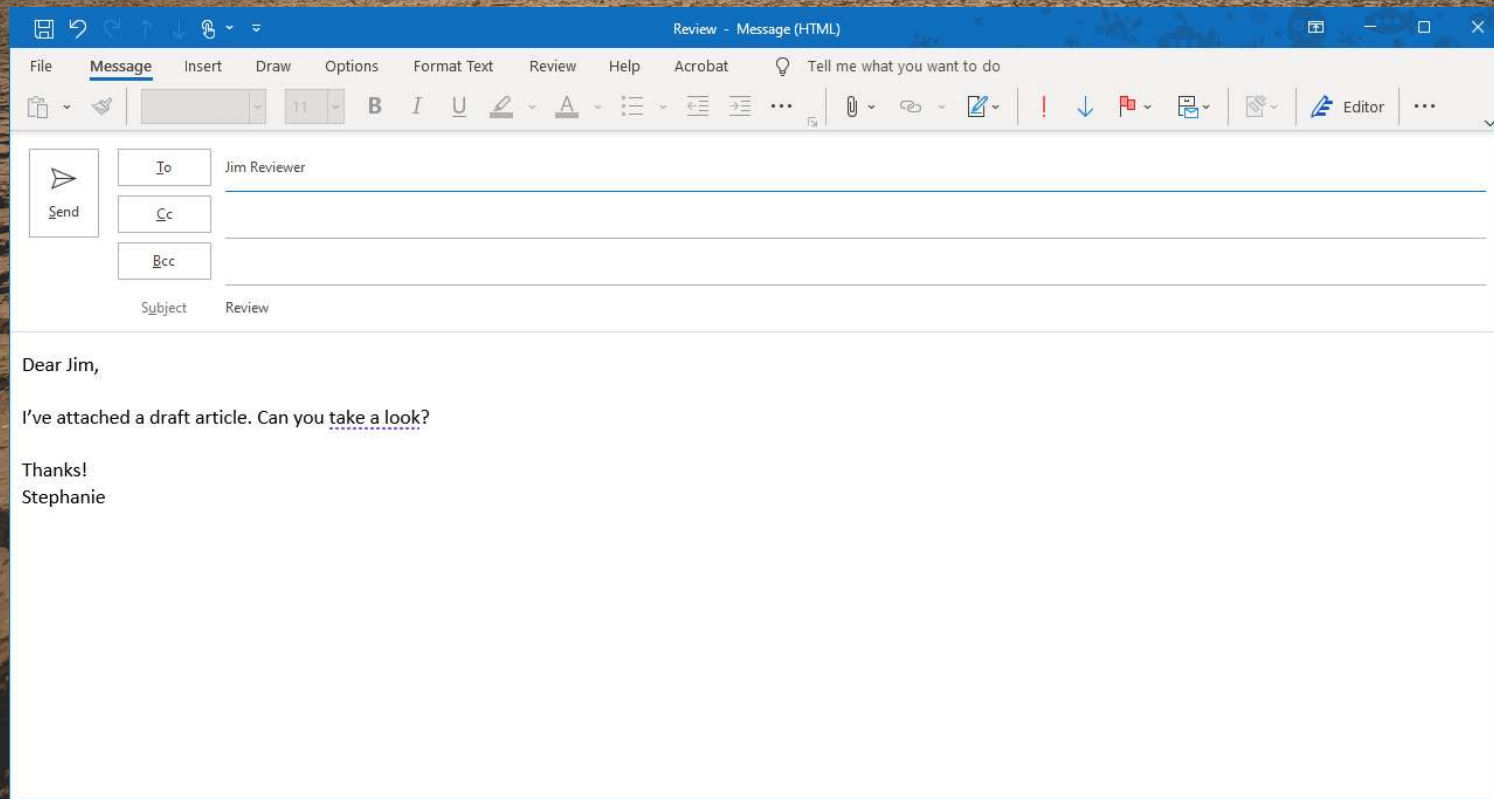


Making the request

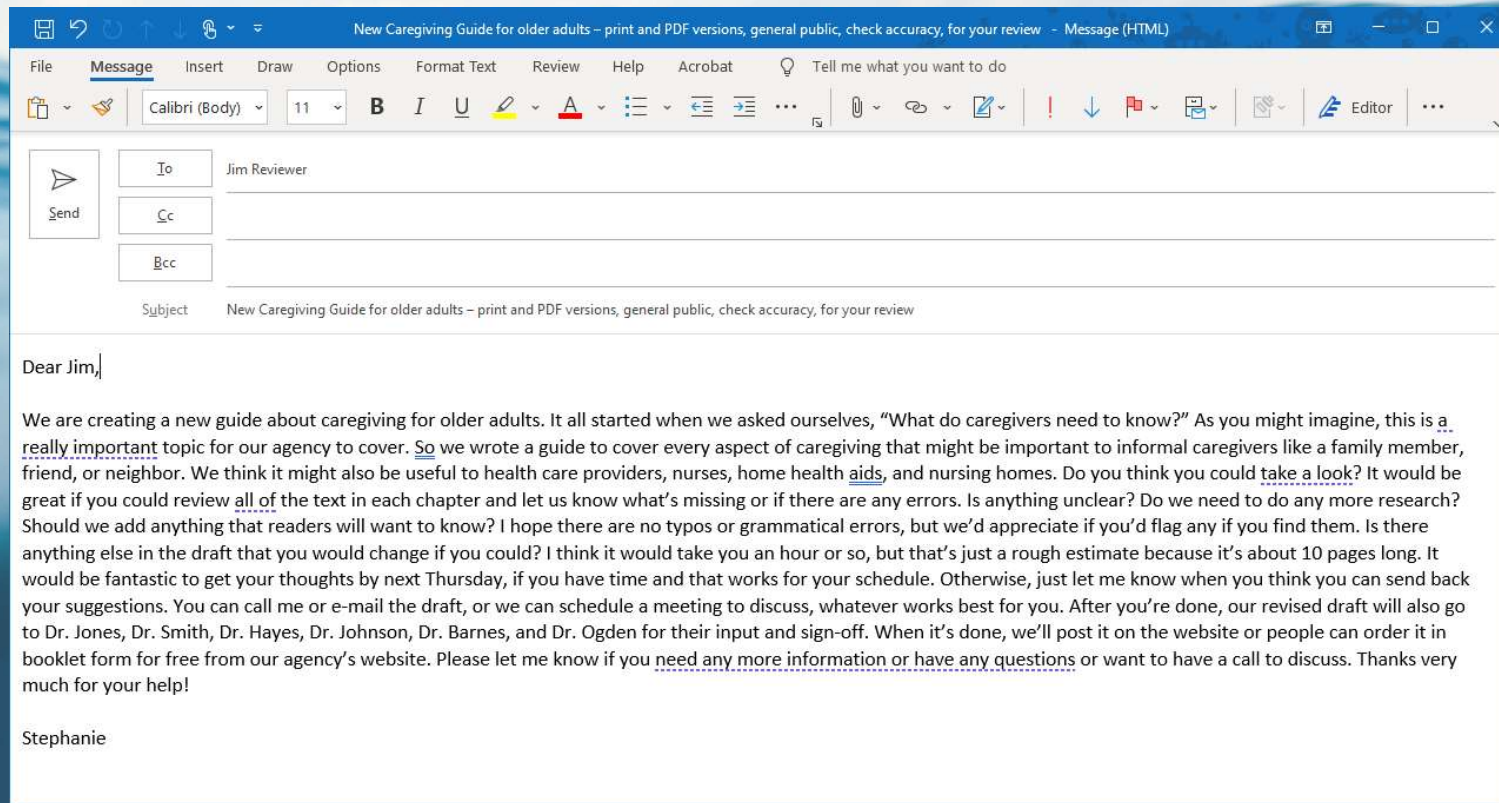
- Be clear about your needs
- Create a brief and scannable message
- Identify the target audience
- Provide the right amount of context
- Explain the editorial process
- Estimate the time the review will take
- Provide a deadline
- Outline next steps



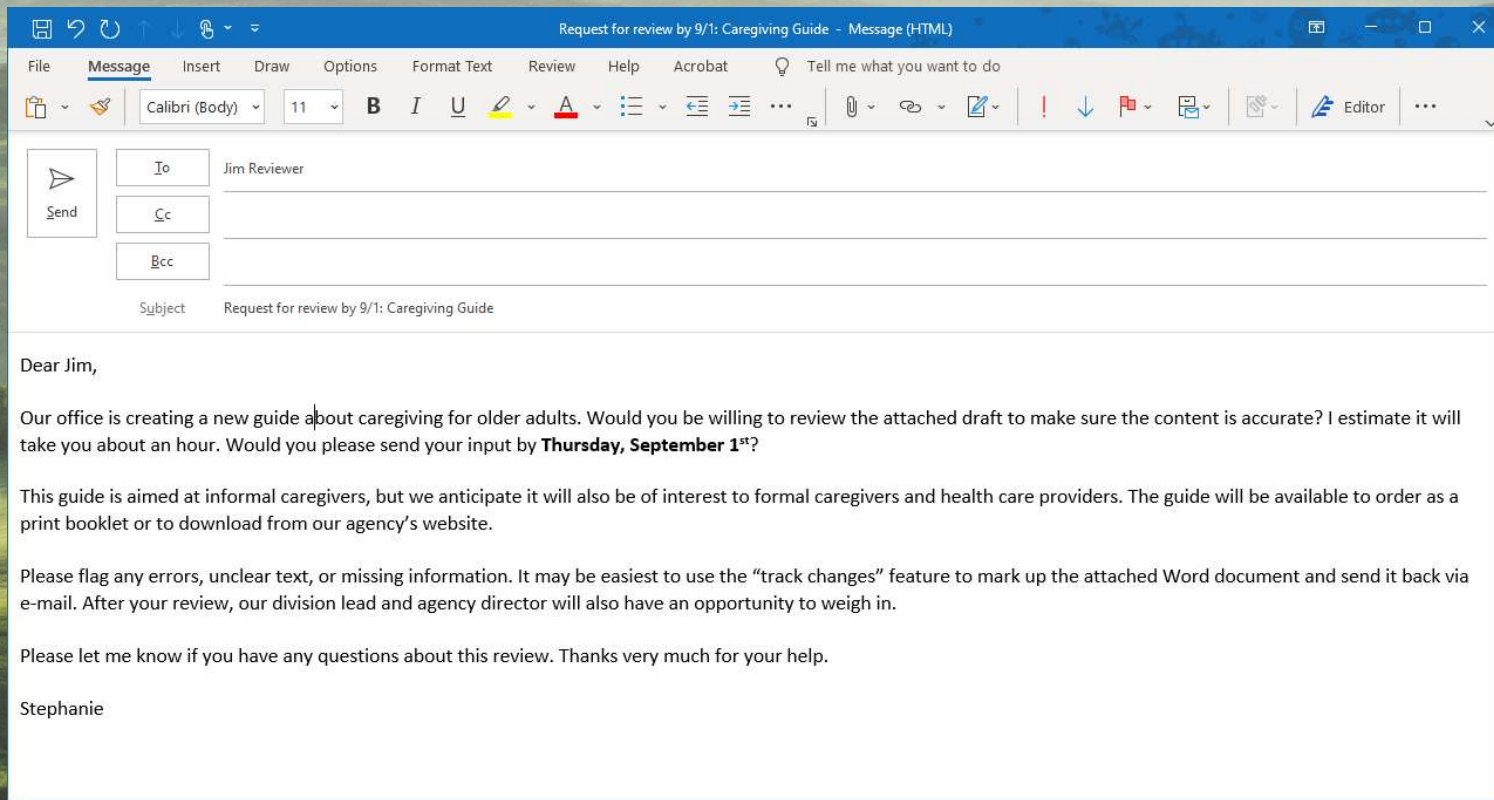
Example 1: Not enough information




Example 2: Too much information



Example 3: The right amount of information



NIH National Library of Medicine



Search MedlinePlus

[About MedlinePlus](#) [What's New](#) [Site Map](#) [Customer Support](#)

[Health Topics](#) [Drugs & Supplements](#) [Genetics](#) [Medical Tests](#) [Videos & Tools](#)

Home → About MedlinePlus → General Information about MedlinePlus → Information about MedlinePlus Genetics → FAQ for expert reviewers

FAQ for expert reviewers

MedlinePlus Genetics content is reviewed by experts from the worldwide scientific community to ensure that it is accurate and up-to-date. These reviews help us provide high-quality information about genetics to patients, their families, and the general public.

We hope this page will help answer questions you may have about the expert review process.

What is MedlinePlus Genetics?

MedlinePlus Genetics is part of MedlinePlus, the National Library of Medicine's website for consumer health information. MedlinePlus Genetics provides information about genetic conditions and the genes or chromosomes related to those conditions. It contains content from the National Library of Medicine's Genetics Home Reference website, which was integrated into MedlinePlus. Please see [About MedlinePlus Genetics](#) to learn more about this resource.

How soon is the review needed?

Our schedule is flexible, but we ask reviewers to return their feedback within two weeks whenever possible.

How much time will the review take?

Depending on the number of documents, reviews can take anywhere from a few minutes to about an hour. Many reviewers tell us, after looking over the materials, that it took less time than they anticipated.

If I don't have time to do a review, can I recommend a colleague?

Yes! We understand that our reviewers are very busy. We welcome feedback from your colleagues who have expertise in the topic.

What kind of feedback are you looking for?

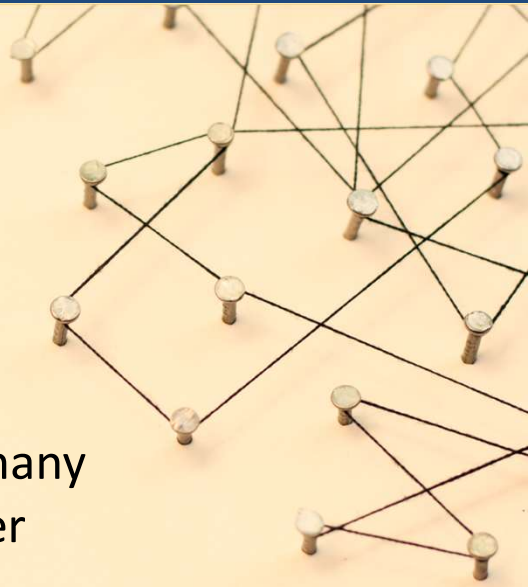
We ask that you look over the documents for scientific and medical accuracy. All suggestions for improvement are welcome.

How should I indicate my suggested changes or comments?

Most reviewers find it easiest to use the Track Changes feature in Microsoft Word (or software compatible with Microsoft Word documents) to insert their suggested changes and make comments, and then return the revised documents via e-mail.

Is there acknowledgment of my review?

We gratefully acknowledge experts' contributions on the [Expert Reviewers](#) page. However, just let us know if you prefer not to be listed on this page.



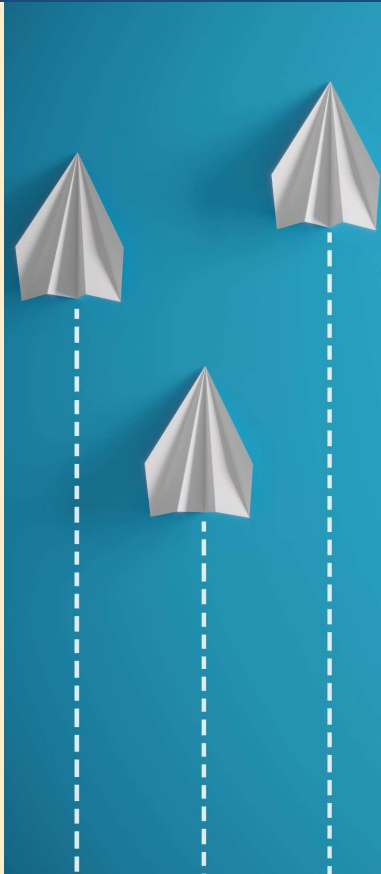
If you work with many reviewers, consider creating a set of instructions or an FAQ

<https://medlineplus.gov/about/general/genetics/expertreviewersfaq/>

Following up

Gatekeepers

- Remind them why the materials are a priority (e.g., audience)
- Negotiate a deadline
- Try meeting instead of e-mailing
- Call on a supervisor or other leader to step in



Subject matter experts

- Tell them when you'll follow up
- Consider how many attempts to make
- Ask whether there's someone else they can recommend
- After a grace period, look for another reviewer

What to do about jargon and technical language

- Some reviewers will be better than others at explaining things plainly.
- Thank every reviewer for his or her time and suggestions.
- Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of using plain language!



Ask yourself:

- Is the change critical? Could you leave the wording as-is or remove it?
- Could you rework the text without using their exact phrasing?
- Are you confident your plain-language rewrite is still accurate?

I disagree with a reviewer's edit...now what?

Don't get defensive or take the feedback personally.

Approach it as a conversation, not a debate:

- Ask the reviewer to explain their rationale.
- Explain your concerns or constraints.
- Share your thought process.
- Be open to changing your mind.

Make it clear that the reviewer's input was valued, even if you didn't take every suggestion.




Juggling feedback from multiple reviewers







Reviewers may make different suggestions for the same text or even contradict one another.

Ask yourself:

Which suggestion is most helpful?
Can I work in elements of both reviewers' edits?
Do I need to make the edits of the highest-ranking reviewer?



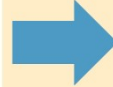
Save different versions of the draft with informative file names.

-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_for_review_07152022
-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_v2_07142022
-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_07132022_Keller_BSR
-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_for_review
-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_jh_review
-  Caregiving conversation guide draft_SMM update

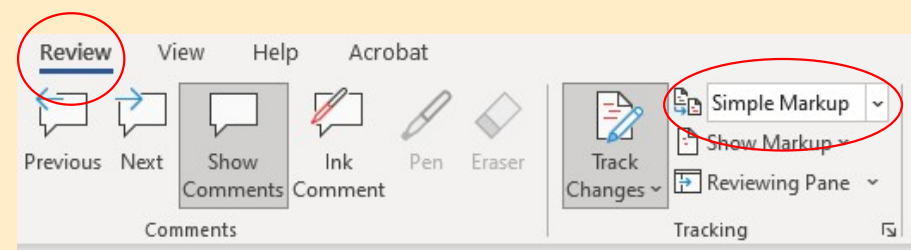
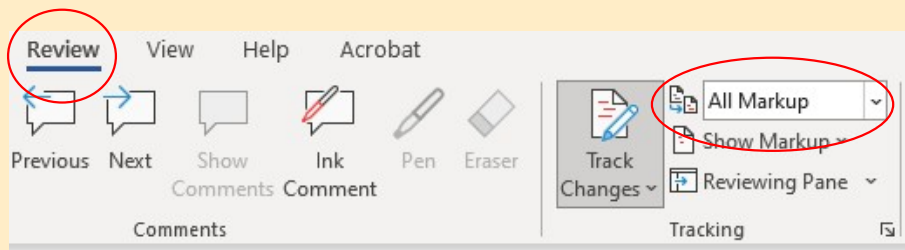
Simple Markup for Tracked Changes

“Simple Markup” can make heavily edited text easier to read.

SOBC scientists use an experimental medicine method to identify the mechanisms that lead to behavior change. Researchers applying the SOBC experimental methodology following this method, researchers first identify an underlying hypothesized mechanism that they think driving drives a certain behavior. In the example of the pedometer, the mechanism might be “awareness of steps,” which drives the behavior of physical activity. Then they develop tools, such as wearing a pedometer, to reliably measure that mechanism reliably, such as wearing a pedometer. Lastly, researchers develop and test interventions in an attempt designed to influence the mechanism. In this case, the intervention would be to have the person wear the pedometer daily so the person is to become more aware of their how many steps they take. If the change in the mechanism (increased awareness of daily steps) causes a change in behavior, such as taking more steps and being more physically active, then researchers can be confident it’s an effective mechanism of behavior change.



SOBC scientists use an experimental medicine method to identify the mechanisms that lead to behavior change. Following this method, researchers first identify an underlying mechanism that they think drives a certain behavior. In the example of the pedometer, the mechanism might be “awareness of steps,” which drives the behavior of physical activity. Then they develop tools, such as wearing a pedometer, to measure that mechanism reliably. Lastly, researchers develop and test interventions designed to influence the mechanism. In this case, the intervention would be to have the person wear the pedometer daily to become more aware of how many steps they take. If the change in the mechanism (increased awareness of daily steps) causes a change in behavior (being more physically active), then researchers can be confident it’s an effective mechanism of behavior change.



Tips for managing reviewers

- ***Make it easy for the reviewer.*** Give them the information they will need up-front and answer their questions.
- ***Be clear about your editorial process.*** This can help avoid misunderstandings later.
- ***Have a reasonable timeline.*** Make sure everyone knows what it is and follow up when you say you will.
- ***Build relationships.*** Ask if you can approach a good reviewer again in the future and keep a list with contact information.
- ***Always be grateful for feedback.*** Even suggestions you can't use were given in good faith. "All feedback is a gift."

How to be a better reviewer



Questions to ask the author:

- Who is the target audience?
- What is your editorial process?
- Which areas would you like me to focus on?
- What kind of feedback would be most helpful?
- What format should I use to send suggestions?
- When do you need this from me?

How to be a better reviewer, continued

When giving feedback:

- Explain your rationale for recommending certain changes
- Understand that the person may not take all of your suggestions
- Make sure your feedback is respectful and constructive
- Meet the agreed-upon deadline...don't make the writer chase you down!

