

Guidelines for JASA/TAS Book Reviewers

1 Procedural Matters

Contact Information. Please be sure that the Associate Editor (AE) has both your electronic and postal mailing addresses and your telephone number.

Books Unsuitable for Review. If you deem the book unworthy of a review in JASA/TAS, please communicate this directly and immediately with the AE.

Review Format and Length. The publishers of JASA/TAS prefer reviews in the \LaTeX format. There is an easy-to-use \LaTeX template made for JASA/TAS Reviews that you can download at <http://magazine.amstat.org/bookreviews> (Click on Reviewers.) If you are \LaTeX -resistant, we can accept reviews in a Word or text file. The AE will let you know if a “short”, “medium”, or “long” review is requested. Generally, a short review is 1–2 pages using the \LaTeX template (double-spaced manuscript pages), a medium review is 3–4 pages, and a long review is 5–6 pages. Let the AE know if you disagree with the suggested review length.

Deadlines. Please observe the deadlines agreed upon with the Associate Editor. Timely book reviews are much more useful to JASA/TAS readers, and the production process introduces a six-month delay after your review is received. If it turns out that you cannot complete your review by the deadline, please contact the Associate Editor so that the book review can be rescheduled or reassigned.

2 Technical Matters

Where to Send the Review. Please send your completed review to the AE handling the book via e-mail. No formal letters are necessary, but attachments with names suggesting what the file contains as well as what type of file (e.g., `JASAReviewofSmith.tex`, `JASAReviewofSmith.pdf`) are appreciated. The AE and/or Editor may get back to you with any points that might need clarification before the review is published.

Editorial Revisions. All reviews are subject to editorial revision. Because space is limited, reviews may be condensed. You will be contacted if the AE suggests substantial changes. The JASA/TAS production staff may

make further editorial revisions to conform to JASA/TAS standards and style. They will contact you directly with galley proofs if deemed necessary. Please be sure to read through page proofs carefully, as occasionally editorial changes can result in subtle alterations of meaning.

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Please make sure that you complete the forms for the correct journal. We cannot sign a copyright transfer form on your behalf. If you expect to be unavailable by e-mail for any length of time before your review appears, please notify either the JASA/TAS Publications Office or the Reviews Editor to ensure that page proofs reach you without delay.

Miscellaneous. The page number(s) for any quotation from the book must be given in the text of the review. JASA/TAS does not allow footnotes. The required format for citations and references is given in *JASA's* Style Guide, which can be found at <http://amstat.tjournals.com/asa-style-guide/>

Thanks! The book is yours to keep. Book reviews play an important role for the statistical community and you have our sincere gratitude for writing the review.

3 Conflicts of Interest

You may be invited to review a book when there is a real or apparent conflict of interest. For instance, the author of the book may be a colleague or a former student, or you may have written a competing book. Please avoid even the semblance of an unacknowledged conflict that could cast the integrity of your review into doubt or undermine the JASA/TAS reputation for scholarly fairness. The Editor and AEs cannot possibly know all circumstances and relationships; discuss any questionable situation with the Editor or AE.

4 Writing Good Reviews

Overall Advice. There is an art to writing a good book review—they resemble good movie reviews. Tell the reader about the story line and plot (what the book is about), identify the characters (how the book addresses

its subject), and how the book impacted you. A review should be accurate and informative, but it is also understood to be an opinion. The Editorial board of JASA/TAS values your candid opinion. You may wish to consult earlier issues of JASA/TAS for examples of content, style, and length in recently published reviews.

It is essential that reviews be comparative and evaluative. Compare the book to established, well-known books on the topic. Help the JASA/TAS reader decide whether they should invest in buying and/or reading the book.

Issues frequently addressed in reviews include:

1. Is this an important book? Does it fill a needed niche?
2. Is the book novel in some way? What is the quality of the book? Are there many errors, either typographical or substantive?
3. What background is required of the reader; i.e., what level of knowledge in mathematics, statistics, or the field of application is assumed?
4. Is the book worth its price? If the book is a new edition, how does it differ from the previous edition(s)? Would you advise purchasing the new edition even if one already has the earlier version?
5. Is the book intended as a course text? If so, at what level (undergraduate/graduate)? Should an instructor consider adopting it? Would you teach from it? Are there exercises and solutions or a teacher's manual or other supplemental teaching materials? How does this text compare with similar previously published texts?

Your review should contain your opinion of the book. JASA/TAS Reviews has no policy requiring you to show your review to the author(s) or publisher before publication. Other reviews of the same book may exist (older editions of JASA/TAS, amazon.com, other journals). Your opinion need not coincide with past reviews.

Negative Reviews What should you say if you dislike the book? Negative reviews do not need to be long; after all, a bad book does not deserve much space. Whereas reviewers should be clear when they do not like a book, they need not discuss all of the book's faults. Talk about similar books that you like better, or mention the topics or approaches that were missing. One type of negativity that is best avoided is criticism over topics the book was not intended to address. Even if you write a negative review, please do try to mention anything that you liked about the book.

Positive Reviews. Suppose that you like the book. Be sure to say this, but realize that the most positive review still takes a critical stance at times. The reader will detect that you put the book to the test, and that it passed. In general, brief reviews containing subjective opinions are preferred to longer reviews that narrate topical contents. Indeed, few read details in long book reviews.

Concluding Comments.

1. Any book, good or bad, is the product of an enormous effort by its authors. Before submitting your review, try to read it from the author's perspective.
2. Invariably, one may question whether the whole book must be read to write an effective review. Candidly, the answer is no. Some books are very technical and a Herculean effort would be required. No reviewer is expected to check all proofs line by line. Nonetheless, we do expect reviewers to read enough of the book to be able to write an informative review.
3. Some useful book review writing references and links are:
 - Drewry, John (1974). *Writing Book Reviews*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT,
 - Teitelbaum, Harry (1989). *How to Write Book Reports*, Prentice Hall, New York City,
 - <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/book-reviews/>
 - <http://subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/content.php?pid=257515&sid=2386985>

Thanks again for your willingness to review for JASA/TAS Reviews!

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