INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

mSphereDirect® is a new publishing path, a faster and more efficient way to publish peer-reviewed Research Articles in *mSphere*. Authors are empowered to secure reviews themselves from qualified reviewers, respond to reviewers' comments, and revise their manuscript prior to submission. *mSphere* Senior Editors validate the appropriateness of the reviewers and evaluate the quality of the submitted reviews. Once *mSphere* has all the required submission elements, a final decision is guaranteed in five working days.

Manuscripts must be submitted as Research Articles and formatted as such according to the *mSphere* Instructions to Authors, including an abstract and an importance paragraph written for nonspecialists. In addition, authors must comply with the following requirements that are specific to mSphereDirect.

Prior to submission, authors should solicit at least two reviews using the external review form. The form should be completed in its entirety, and ALL solicited reviews must be submitted. Failure to do so may result in an ethics investigation. Reviewer names will be published if the manuscript is accepted. *mSphere* Senior Editors will consider the following points when judging the appropriateness of the reviewers.

Reviewers:

- Must have published at least 5 scientific articles, within the corresponding area of expertise and within the past 5 years, in established peer-reviewed, international, English-language journals that are indexed in PubMed, as a first or corresponding author in at least two of the publications
- Must be affiliated with an established nonprofit or for-profit institution and must have an institutional e-mail address
- May not be from the same institution as the author(s)
- May not have coauthored articles or otherwise collaborated with the author(s) within the last 5 years
- Must not have trained with or mentored (i.e., as a doctoral or postdoctoral advisor) the author(s) at any time
- Must be in a faculty-level (or comparable) position or have completed at least 5 years of postdoctoral training
- Must have agreed to be identified by name and institutional affiliation in the published paper if the manuscript is accepted

Authors should make any necessary modifications in response to the reviewers' comments. A summary cover letter outlining why the particular reviewers were chosen and how the review process was undertaken must be provided. Also provide a marked-up manuscript file, and upload point-by-point responses to the reviews as a Response to Reviewer Comments file. Authors must share the revised manuscript with the reviewers prior to submission and provide e-mail confirmation from the reviewers that they are satisfied with the revisions. The review form will provide reviewers with explicit instructions regarding the format and content of the review. Prior to submission, authors should ensure that the reviews contain all the required elements. Reviewers will receive a link to the final, submitted manuscript, which will include the responses to reviewers' comments.

Please see this example of properly formatted and assembled materials for submission.

Authors may deposit a PDF of the manuscript in bioRxiv, a free online archive and distribution service for unpublished preprints in the life sciences.

The final manuscript and supporting materials may be submitted directly through the *mSphere* submission system or via the bioRxiv direct submission feature. Upon acceptance of a manuscript, bioRxiv will tag the preprint version as accepted for publication in *mSphere* on their website. The following items are required for submission:

- Final reviewed and revised manuscript plus marked-up manuscript file showing what changes were made
- At least two (2) completed and signed mSphereDirect external review forms
- Cover letter that outlines the review process, including why the particular reviewers were chosen, and briefly describes how the reviewers' comments have been addressed. Point-by-point responses to reviewers' comments must be provided and uploaded as a Response to Reviewer Comments file.
- E-mail verification from each reviewer stating that he or she has seen the final manuscript and agrees that the authors have addressed the concerns

After the manuscript is received by mSphereDirect, reviewers' qualifications will be validated and the manuscript will be assigned to a Senior Editor. The Senior Editor will assess the appropriateness of the reviewer selection, the quality of the reviews, the quality of the manuscript as indicated by the reviews, and the authors' rebuttal. An "accept" or "reject" decision will be rendered. Senior Editors will be the final arbiters of the integrity of the review process.

Senior Editors will not send submitted mSphereDirect manuscripts out for additional review; the manuscript will be accepted or rejected as submitted. Rejected mSphereDirect manuscripts may not be resubmitted via this pathway but may be resubmitted to the regular *mSphere* submission path or to another ASM journal. Accepted mSphereDirect papers will be of the same quality and significance as regular *mSphere* papers. A manuscript rejected on scientific grounds for publication by one ASM journal cannot be considered through the mSphereDirect path but can be submitted to *mSphere* through the regular submission path. Reviewers' names and institutional affiliations will be published with the manuscript if the manuscript is accepted. Reviewers are asked to acknowledge this policy on the reviewer form. If a reviewer does not agree to disclose his or her name, that review will not be considered.

Accepted articles will be copyedited and final articles will be published online as soon as possible. All articles will be published with open access using the CC-BY license. For a corresponding author who is an active member of ASM at any level except the Supporting member level, the Article Processing Charge (APC) (subject to change without notice) is $2,300. For a corresponding author who is a nonmember or Supporting member, the APC (subject to change without notice) is $3,150.

Nonmember corresponding authors may join ASM to obtain discounts on APCs. Former members who wish to renew their membership at the same level my do so online. However, to change your membership level, please contact customer service at Service@asmusa.org.

For more information, please visit the mSphereDirect page.

Author Checklist

Below is a quick checklist specific to mSphereDirect® submissions. Manuscripts must be submitted as Research Articles and formatted as such according to the *mSphere* Instructions to Authors. This list is not all-inclusive. Authors are encouraged to review those Instructions to Authors for additional guidelines and details, as well as a more general checklist.

Required Submission Elements	
Cover Letter	☐ Includes a description of why the particular reviewers were chosen and how the review process was undertaken.
Final Reviewed and Revised Manuscript	☐ Double-space and left-justify the manuscript; use 12-point type and 1-inch margins; use portrait layout for 8½″ × 11″ paper. Add continuous line numbers.
	☐ Title page. On the title page (first page of the manuscript), include the full working title, author byline with all authors' full names and affiliations, and the corresponding author's contact information.
	☐ Abstract. The abstract (≤250 words) should concisely summarize the content of the paper without presenting extensive experimental details.
	☐ Importance paragraph. Separate from the abstract, the Importance paragraph (≤150 words) should be a nontechnical explanation of why the work was undertaken.
	☐ Upload a marked-up manuscript file showing the changes made.
Response to Reviewers	☐ Upload the point-by-point responses to the reviews as a Response to Reviewer Comments file.
Manuscript Approvals	☐ E-mail confirmation from the reviewers that they are satisfied with the revision and recommend publication. Save e-mails as PDFs and upload them as Related Manuscript File(s).
Review Forms	☐ Include at least two (2) completed and signed mSphereDirect review forms. (ALL solicited reviews must be submitted.)
Example	☐ Please see this example of properly formatted and assembled materials for submission.

Reviewers	
Reviewer Requirements	☐ Must have published at least five scientific articles, within the corresponding area of expertise and within the past 5 years, in established peer-reviewed, international, English-language journals that are indexed in PubMed, as a first or corresponding author in at least two of the publications.
	☐ Must be affiliated with an established nonprofit or for-profit institution and must have an institutional e-mail address.
	☐ May not be from the same institution as the author(s).
	☐ May not have coauthored articles or otherwise collaborated with the author(s) within the last 5 years.
	☐ Must not have trained with or mentored (i.e., as a doctoral or postdoctoral advisor) the author(s) at any time.
	☐ Must be in a faculty-level (or comparable) position or have completed at least 5 years of postdoctoral training.
	☐ Must have agreed to be identified by name and institutional affiliation in the published paper if the manuscript is accepted.