

Responding to Reviewers



Things to keep in mind when responding to reviewers

- Structure
- Thoroughness
- Attitude
- Strategy

Responding to Reviewers: Structure (of the response)

- Provide an overview, then quote the full set of reviews
- Use typography to help the reviewer navigate your response

P24 fig 5 right: we see here that the MSAs are very good, with ~90% of well aligned residue pairs. What about harder cases with (say) 50% of errors? Is this representative of real cases, e.g. with large number of taxa? A bit of discussion is needed there ...

Response: We agree. As we now explain in the manuscript, 90% pairwise accuracy is roughly in line with the performance of typical aligners on empirical benchmarks such as Balibase. Note that the score is computed on a pairwise-residue level and so is not very sensitive to the number of taxa, in contrast to column-wise scores, which rapidly degrade with increasing number of taxa.

P25 “to fare better”

Response: the formulation seems correct to us. We use “to fare better” in the sense “to perform better”.

P26 “to leave our some”

Response: fixed.

Make the response self-contained

- Quote the changes directly in the response
 - Refer to specific line number
- Makes it easier for the reviewer to understand exactly what you did without having to flip back and forth between your manuscript and the response
 - Reduces the chance that reviewer will read the whole paper and find new things to complain about
- Except when a large chunk of modified text (e.g., a new section) is too long to quote.
 - Refer to it explicitly in the response (e.g., give title of the new section)

Responding to Reviewers: Thoroughness

- Respond to every point raised by the reviewer
- Be clear about what changed relative to the previous version
- Typical ways to respond to each point:
 - *You are right, here's how we addressed the criticism...*
 - *This is a misunderstanding because things were unclearly formulated. We have clarified...*
 - *This is a legitimate/pertinent concern in general, but in this specific case...*



Responding to Reviewers: Attitude

- Don't be scared by major revisions
- Accept the blame
- Be polite and respectful of all reviewers
- Remember that reviewers are typical readers



Responding to Reviewers: Strategy

- When possible, do what the reviewer asks
- Be prepared for discrepancies
- Compromise
 - *You can't do everything*
 - *When in doubt, ask the editor*



How to get your scientific paper published: Responding to Reviewers

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2cfcH1P8E8>



Check out the other videos in the “How to get published” series:

- The writing process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQrJyDsddZc&t=4s>

- Journal selection:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFnIsWrljLQ&t=1s>

- Responding to reviewers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2cfcH1P8E8>

Expectation for peer-review

- Do a careful read of the paper
- Please look at the document “**How to peer review**” and use as a check-sheet
- Be specific on points (quote sentences and pages)
- You can submit either a text or document