

DIS 2018 Guide to Reviewing Papers

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1. Prelude

This page provides guidelines for reviewers responsible for assessing submissions to DIS 2018. It borrows from two sources. First, it borrows liberally from [CHI 2018 reviewing guide](#). Second, it adds context designed to assist novice reviewers. Here it builds on review instructions drafted for Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces DPPI 2007 (<http://www2.uiah.fi/~ikoskine/dppi07/index.html> > Tips to novice referees).

DIS 2018 follows a standard review process in which authors are required to anonymize their papers so that reviewers do not know them. On the other hand, authors do not know who their reviewers are. The process, as the word goes, is “blind.”

The reason for having a blind review process is that blindness efficiently eliminates many interests that might bias knowledge production. The review process of DIS makes sure that power, loyalties, money, and reputation play only a minimal role in determining whether a paper is accepted or not.

As the theory goes, reviewing is the essential quality guarantee in research. We do research to produce claims that can be treated as knowledge: when we read a paper

from DIS, we can trust it (or at least we know whether we can trust what we read). Peer review is good way to guarantee that research builds on knowledge interest, as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas once characterized free research, not on partisan interests in economics, politics, university affiliations, and the like.

2. Review process

For more information about the overall DIS review process, see <http://dis2018.org/>. We have also provided more detailed instructions for ACs and SCs in a separate file (“DIS 2018 Integrated Review Process for ACs and SCs.docx”). It is available on request from TCs.

2.1 Some things happen before you get a paper

When you get a paper, it has already gone through a few steps in the review process.

First, Technical Chairs (TC) have reviewed the paper briefly. TCs have then sent them to Subcommittee Chairs (SC), who have reviewed them briefly. SCs have sent them to Associate Chairs (AC). ACs, in their turn, have typically read the paper (or at least browsed it carefully) before thinking about who might be a good reviewer for it.

As a reviewer, you enter the story at this point. If the AC’s choice is you, you are performing your work at the end of a pretty long, but absolutely crucial, chain of expertise. You are the first who reads the paper in detail and writes a review.

There are two ACs, whom we call 1AC and 2AC. If you are a reviewer, 1AC is your contact point.

It is good to keep in mind that you are not alone reviewing. There are two more reviewers, both assigned by the ACs. 1AC knows two of them, but typically not the third, who is assigned by 2AC. The purpose is obvious: having three reviewers eliminates the chance of personal biases and that way leads to a more fair and – hopefully – accurate assessment.

Notice, though, that this is an editorial process. Reviews and scores are a crucial part that leads to a decision to accept the paper or not, but the final decision is in the hands of ACs, SCs and the Program Committee of the conference. This process may already have worked for you. Although it is not common in HCI/interaction design conferences, higher chairs may have already edited submissions by deciding to exclude some submissions. These are typically papers without references, clear opinion pieces, and badly written jokes (good jokes always have a chance as long as they teach us something).

2.2 Key points in writing a review

2.2.1 Contribution as the key criteria in reviewing

Your primary criterion for judging a paper is: Does this submission provide a strong contribution to the field of HCI?

From full papers to other submission formats. Full papers must break new ground and make an original research contribution. From CHI 2018 Web site, you find [Guide to a Successful Submission](#) for some criteria you can use to assess contribution. Other submission formats – like Provocations and Work-in-Progress – should present brief and focused research contributions that are noteworthy, but may not be as comprehensive or provide the same depth of results as a 10-page Paper.

Assessing contribution. Contribution sounds simple, but is not: in research, it is the writer’s task to show how the paper adds knowledge:

- Ultimately, the only way authors can show that their paper makes a contribution it is to go through existing literature and show that what they tell has not been said before
- This is why literature review is essential - it is *not* a showpiece or a ritual!
- At least, the paper should correct something in existing literature (science is a self-correcting system), add a new observation, or offer a novel interpretation of known facts.

Doing any of these actions in a credible manner requires that the author goes through literature about the topic carefully. For reviewers, literature review is an essential tool for deciding whether the authors are at the top of their game or not.

In a fairly mature field of research like HCI, showing contribution typically means that the literature review section has to reference HCI literature thoroughly, not jumping into philosophical statements or generally known “facts” (we see this happening in design, art and architecture).

Remember, however, that there are many ways a paper can make a contribution to HCI, and you should review the paper appropriately. See “[Contributions to CHI](#)” for details.

2.2.2 Proof

A second crucial component of a good paper is proof, or the way in which it makes its argument credible or believable. In studying proof, you should look at these things:

- Is theory up-to-date? (This is not always relevant)
- Assess the main concepts of the study: as a rule, they should be clear; not contradictory (if the paper says one thing in one place and something else in another, which one to believe? Can you know what the paper is talking about?); not circular (of course, bachelors are unmarried, as Immanuel Kant noted, but this is a conceptual truth, not an informative claim)
- Next go through data: it is gathered in ways that make sense; it is large enough, complex enough, etc. to back up the claims of the paper
- Go through analysis: does analysis follow good research practices, whether qualitative or quantitative, formal or constructive; is all data analyzed
- “Logic”: does the paper answer the question it poses?

Again, keep in mind there are many ways in which proof can be done. If you have built an interactive system, you can try to validate your point – or parts of it – through field tests, experiments, surveys, technical performance measures, etc.

2.2.3 Tips for reading a paper

When reading the paper, start slow and let the paper sink in before getting to the keyboard. Focus first on “what’s the news” in it. Write it down in one sentence: if you can do this, the paper is typically clear and makes its point well enough. Then go to proof – concepts, data, analysis, and logic – and revise your initial judgment to one direction or another.

Don’t start from proof! The world is full of papers that are technically perfect but add very little to knowledge.

2.2.4 Compiling a recommendation for the paper

When weighting what to recommend, our guide is to be skeptical but fair. Research is a form of “organized skepticism”: we refuse to accept claims at their face value. Instead, we seek evidence. On the other hand, when we find convincing evidence for a claim, we accept it even when we do not like it. It is the writer’s task to convince the reviewer about contribution and provide means for examining proof!

- A good rule of thumb is to start from contribution: a paper that makes a solid contribution is usually accepted even with minor problems in proof
- On the other hand, if the contribution is meager, the paper has to be technically flawless. These kinds of papers are usually accepted, but to get high scores in the review process, contribution is more important

2.2.5 Inputting the review to Precision Conference System

After all this work, you have to submit the paper to Precision Conference System. When doing this, a good tactic is to prepare the review and copy-paste it.

Before you can submit the review, Precision asks some pieces of information:

- *Your expertise level.* A simple score that can range from expert to barely knowledgeable)
- *Overall score for the paper.* This takes a few seconds, but it is important for the whole review process: many subsequent processes depend on it. Reviewers rate each paper using a 5-point ranking scale; your written appraisal must support your numeric ranking.
- *Review.* This is typically an open field where you can input your review. Experienced reviewers normally...
 - Start the review with a brief summary of the paper (this is a good test of whether the paper is intelligible)
 - List its good points
 - Assess contribution
 - Assess proof
 - Add literature tips and other information that is useful for the authors in the future.
- *Messages to the Program Committee.* You can finally report thoughts and observations authors won't see.

2.2.6 The length of the review

As CHI 2018 review instructions say so well, a high-quality review is typically about a page of written text; very short reviews are frustrating for authors and hurt the review process. Always put yourself in the author's position: what level of detailed feedback would you like to see for your own work?

(In top journals, reviews may be even longer than the paper. Writing a good review is a lot of work, but it is essential in improving the quality of a discipline in the long run).

2.2.7 Conflicts of interest

If you have a conflict of interest with the authors, report it to your ACs immediately so that they can assign another reviewer.

A conflict of interest should be substantial, including a direct working relationship, relatively recent publications with the authors, or supervisor relationship. It may also cover a well-known controversy that might cloud your judgment, but we get to a slippery slope if we get too far into perceived conflicts.

ACs will for sure avoid obvious conflicts of interest by, for example, not assigning reviewers from the authors' department, but they cannot foresee everything.

2.3 If you spot material from prior publications

Like in any other conference, content appearing at DIS should be new and, if you hit gold, ground-breaking. Therefore, if you spot material that has been published previously, you should try to determine whether this is within acceptable limits and report your observations to your subcommittee chair.

You can distinguish three cases:

1. *Plagiarism*. If you detect clear plagiarism, you should reject the paper and report your finding as soon as possible.
2. *Translations*. Work that has previously been presented or published in a language other than English may be translated and published in English at DIS if the original author is one of the authors and the abstract clearly says it the paper is a translation.
3. *Self-plagiarism*. CHI 2018 gives a few guidelines that can be applied directly to DIS:
 - *Non-archival material* such as workshop presentations and posters do not count as prior publications and needs minor revision only.
 - *Archival materials* published in ACM library or similar. These need significant revision. A significant revision should contain more than 25% new content material (i.e., material that offers new insights, new results, etc.), and it should significantly amplifies or clarifies the original material. In usual editorial practice, this requirement is in 33% range.

2.4 Transfers to another submission category

DIS 2018 timeline allows one possibility. If you spot a paper that is very, very interesting and novel, but builds on weak proof, you can tell in review that it ought to be shortened and submitted into Provocations/Work-in-Progress. If the writer self-identifies as doctoral student, you may also recommend transferring the paper to Doctoral Consortium.

One purpose of a conference like DIS is to raise the next generation of academics by bringing them into the conference to observe how more experienced researchers argue and present. If your ACs and SCs agree with this, they may suggest the authors that they should consider another format than full papers, even though full papers are the most prestigious category of a conference, academically speaking.

If authors agree with this recommendation, they have to shorten and reformat the paper and resubmit it. They have a few days to do it.

3. Subcommittees

To improve the reviewing process, the DIS program committee is divided into four subcommittees. Each sub-committee is responsible for a topic area. Each subcommittee has four Subcommittee Chairs (SCs) and several Associate Chairs (ACs) who are knowledgeable in its topics.

As a reviewer, you should not judge the paper by how well it fits the subcommittee theme(s)! Many papers will not cleanly fit into a particular subcommittee for a variety of reasons, and we do not want to penalize authors for this. The fit to some subcommittee is best assessed by DIS Program Committee, which has a full picture of submissions.

The primary criterion for review is the submission's contribution to HCI. The subcommittee organization is there to improve reviewer matches and to better handle the volume of submissions, not to dictate what should be published!

If you have a paper that does not fit the subcommittee theme, evaluate it as best you can with respect to its own quality. Any topic is valid as long as it fits within the interests of a reasonable fraction of the overall CHI audience.

From an author point of view, there are few things as annoying as getting rejected because the paper does not fit to the theme of the conference. Conferences are for promoting free research and thinking, and closing them by defining a set of suitable topics works against this premise.

4. Program Committee (PC): what does it mean for you

We have referred to Program Committee a few times by now. In the narrow sense of the term, means a meeting in March in which Subcommittee Chairs convene with Technical Chairs to decide which papers are accepted to the conference. It is the ultimate and final decision-making body.

Your reviews will first be seen by your AC, who compiles reviews and writes a metareview that ends up with a recommendation of whether the paper should be accepted or not. The reviews and the metareviews are then seen by Subcommittee Chairs, who convene and decide which papers are recommended to the Program Committee meeting.

From your viewpoint, then, this means you have two audiences.

The first – and the most important – are the authors, whom you help to write better papers.

The second – and only marginally less important – is your AC to whom you submit your review, and those SCs your AC addresses her metareviews to. If you do your work well, they get enough information about the paper, its contribution, and its technical quality from your reviews. The rest of the process is in their hands. Your review is key input in the process that leads to accepting or rejecting a paper, but of course, it does not tie them. As a rule, they are experienced academics whose ethical standards are high, so they will respect your review.

5. How reviewers are credited

You will be mentioned as a reviewer in the conference Web site at some point in Spring 2018 (it will be *tiny* print).

6. What about DIS 2019

The organizers of DIS 2019 will get your name, e-mail, and affiliation from the 2018 organizers. It will be in an excel file the 2019 organizers can use in their conference promotion. Thus, if you review for 2018, you may get a conference announcement from the 2019 chairs. If you do not want this, let the 2018 organizers know before the 2018 conference dates.

7. Useful readings

Like CHI 2018 organizers, we highly recommend Ken Hinckley's thoughtful piece on excellent reviewing practice:

<http://mobilehci.acm.org/2015/download/ExcellenceInReviewsforHCICommunity.pdf>

8. What makes a good paper? References to think about

We have compiled a list of exemplary (and interesting) papers from the DIS years. Some of our favorites are:

- Ron Wakkary, Doenja Oogjes, Sabrina Hauser, Henry Lin, Fu Cheng Cao, Leo Ma (2017). Morse Things: A Design Inquiry into the Gap Between Things and Us. Proceedings of the 2017 Conference of Designing Interactive Systems, pp. 503-514. DOI=[10.1145/3064663.3064734](https://doi.org/10.1145/3064663.3064734)
- Laura Devendorf and Daniela Rosner (2017). Beyond Hybrids: Metaphors and Margins in Design. Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, pp. 995-1000. DOI=[10.1145/3064663.3064705](https://doi.org/10.1145/3064663.3064705)
- Lynn Dombrowski, Ellie Harmon, Sarah Fox (2016). Social Justice-Oriented Interaction Design: Outlining Key Design Strategies and Commitments. Proceedings of the 2016 ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, pp. 656-671. doi>[10.1145/2901790.2901861](https://doi.org/10.1145/2901790.2901861)

Over the years, CHI has published several papers discussing what makes a paper good. To get an idea, you may look at some of them:

- Greenberg, S. and Buxton, B. 2008. Usability evaluation considered harmful (some of the time). In Proceeding of the Twenty-Sixth Annual SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. CHI '08. ACM, 111-120. DOI=<http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/1357054.1357074>
- Dourish, P. 2006. Implications for design. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. CHI '06, ACM, 541-550. DOI=<http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/1124772.1124855>
- Newman, W. 1994. A preliminary analysis of the products of HCI research, using pro forma abstracts. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems: Celebrating interdependence (Boston, Massachusetts, United States, April 24 – 28, 1994). ACM, New York, NY, 278-284. DOI=<http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/191666.191766>