

IEEE VR 2026 Guidelines for Reviewers

This document provides guidelines for international program committee (IPC) members and reviewers responsible for assessing submissions to IEEE VR 2026. Section 1 summarizes the key changes from the IEEE VR 2025 reviewing cycle. Section 2 contains general principles applicable to ALL reviewers, Section 3 contains guidance for program committee members (1AC and 2AC), Section 4 contains instructions for assigning reviewers in PCS, and Section 5 contains guidance on meta-reviews (applicable only to primary coordinators [1ACs]).i

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1. IMPORTANT CHANGES for the IEEE VR 2026 reviewing cycle

- **Large Language Models (LLMs) are strictly prohibited from being used for writing reviews or meta-reviews at any stage.** Failure to abide by this is an ethical violation, and may be considered Highly Irresponsible conduct (see below).
- **Highly Irresponsible conduct in the reviewing process will be penalized at the discretion of the Program Committee, up to and including desk rejection of the reviewer's submitted papers.**
 - Examples of behaviors that may be considered Highly Irresponsible
 - Use of LLMs in reviewing
 - Unsubmitted reviews
 - Notably late reviews
 - Submitted reviews that are of notably poor quality (e.g., single-sentence reviews)
- **Unless serving IEEE VR 2026 in another capacity, all senior (PhD-holding) authors are expected to volunteer as reviewers.** This supersedes the prior requirement that one author for each paper commit to reviewing; if a paper has multiple senior co-authors, all are expected to volunteer.

2. Guidelines for All Reviewers

Each reviewer should judge a paper to ensure that it is technically sound and makes a contribution to the field. The program chairs recommend taking a positive attitude toward these two concepts. We recommend looking for novel ideas that will advance virtual, augmented or mixed reality research. Minor errors that can be easily corrected in a revision should not be held against the standard of technical correctness and used as a reason for rejecting a paper. A review should be specific and have detailed comments about the work so that the authors, other reviewers, and the program chairs can understand your thinking about the paper's potential contribution and technical correctness.

a. Uploading a manuscript to or using LLMs in the reviewing/meta-reviewing process is strictly prohibited

- This applies whether the LLM is hosted locally or is web-based, and whether it is accessed directly or via an API.
- This prohibition includes, but is not limited to:
 - Using an LLM to generate review content.
 - Using an LLM for background information/literature search.
 - Loading paper content into an LLM to perform translation or summarization.
- NOTE: The PC is aware that it is not currently feasible to definitively determine whether a review was written by an LLM. Rather, if it is suspected that this policy was violated, the review(s) will be assessed to determine whether they are Highly Irresponsible.

b. Highly irresponsible conduct is strictly prohibited

- If a reviewer is found to behave in a Highly Irresponsible fashion, they may face penalties up to and including desk rejection of their submitted papers at the discretion of the Program Committee.
- Specific examples of Highly Irresponsible conduct include:
 - Unapproved use of LLMs, as described above
 - Failure to submit, without early warning, an agreed-to review
 - Late submission of an agreed-to review
 - Submission of a notably poor quality review (e.g., extremely short, comments not aligned with the score, inflammatory language)
 - Inviting reviewers that you would have a conflict with
 - Review plagiarism (e.g., copy-pasting from other reviews on PCS, having someone else write a review for you)

c. All qualified authors are expected to volunteer as reviewers

- In recent years, the number of submissions to IEEE VR has substantially increased, and with it, the pressure on the community to provide

high-quality reviews. To reduce this pressure and make reviewing more equitable, **all qualified** authors are expected to volunteer to review.

- Specific exemptions include:
 - Researchers who are already serving IEEE VR 2026 in another capacity
 - Researchers who are new to the IEEE VR conference and community
 - Student researchers, including PhD students (Senior PhD students are welcome to review, but will not be required to do so.)

d. **More general advice**

- The primary aspect for accepting/rejecting a paper is its contribution: We consider a paper of *sufficient quality* if it presents a strong, tangible contribution to a specific aspect of the state of the art and the authors' research. The authors can present preliminary findings if they support the authors' assumptions, but more complete findings are always welcome.
- IEEE VR accepts papers making sound technical contributions to virtual, augmented, and mixed reality. If you think that a paper is out of scope for IEEE VR, please explain why clearly in your review and suggest other venues for the paper that would better match the paper's focus. In general, IEEE VR wants to maintain an open mind about virtual reality technologies and present a broad spectrum of technical papers. Papers should only be rejected if the lack of fit is apparent.
- Papers with easily correctable flaws (such as missing references, minor spelling/grammar/usage problems, missing implementation details, and the like) can be accepted. The reviewers should ask the authors to correct such flaws in their final version. It is expected that 1AC ensures those papers make the appropriate changes.
- Mind that the review form will ask you to provide an "Overall Rating" of the paper on a 1-8 scale. Your written appraisal should support this overall numeric rating. This year (IEEE VR 2026), there are no separate tracks for conference and journal submissions. In this year's unified review process you are asked to score the submission as a conference paper.
- A high-quality review should have well-considered commentary, e.g., 500 words or more, as warranted. Short and/or content-free reviews are insufficient, may frustrate the authors, and may indeed be considered Highly Irresponsible.
- The preceding advice also applies to positive reviews. Positive reviews that are short or lack justification may create difficulty during the PC discussions.

- State specifically the reason(s) for the score you selected for this paper. Clearly describe on what grounds the paper should be accepted or rejected.
- Describe the contributions in the paper and why they are noteworthy or important.
- Explicitly and clearly discuss the weaknesses and limitations, but do so in a positive and constructive manner. Specifically, be positive and not insulting.
- Your comments should assess the work the authors actually did, the contributions they claim, and whether their methods are appropriate to support these claims. A feeling that the authors “should have done” something differently is insufficient grounds for rejection.
- In the case of papers tackling two (or more) topics, and you do not have the necessary expertise to thoroughly review one of them, explicitly write so in your review so that the primary and other reviewers are aware of this limit.
- Reviews will be considered final when the discussion phase commences. Please ensure that you have submitted a complete and well-considered review at this time. If y
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In general, as you perform your review, we ask that you reflect on the overall merits and to read papers with care and sympathy. Many hours of work — in some cases, years of work — have gone into the research and writing of every paper. Try to avoid last-minute reviews.

Remember that your decisions affect IEEE VR's public appearance. Therefore, the conference program chairs are very serious about ensuring the highest possible reviewing standards for IEEE VR. The coordinators and/or program chairs will ask you to improve your review if we think the reason for your judgment is unclear.

3. Guidelines for Program Committee Members (1AC and 2AC)

- **For a submission for which you serve as a 1AC (aka coordinator, primary)**
 - **From September 17 to September 24 2025, hidden conflict of interest.**
 - Skim as soon as possible to see if you have a hidden conflict of interest with the submission.

- Let one of the program chairs know via direct email as soon as possible, making sure the chair chosen to be notified is not an author of the submission.
- **From September 17 to September 24 2025, desk rejection.**
 - Decide whether the submission should be desk rejected; possible reasons: lack of anonymity, submission length outside the acceptable range, exceptionally weak submission, incomplete submission, big changes in format, out of scope of the conference, or IRB status is missing or not clearly explained.
 - Consult with the 2AC. If consensus, recommend desk rejection. Write a brief justification of this decision. Desk rejection requires the agreement of both the 1AC and 2AC. Desk rejected papers do not require external reviewers. Please use the review form to mark the submission for desk reject, or *mark it as cleared if no desk reject was identified*.
- **From September 17 to October 5 2025, when contacted by the 2AC, assist with possible early rejection.**
 - The 2AC has to perform a full review of the submission by October 1st.
 - If the 2AC score is 2 or below, 2AC will ask you to perform a full review of the submission.
 - If your (1AC) score is 2 or below, recommend early rejection, and do not assign external reviewers.
 - A submission cannot be early rejected without two full reviews.
- **From October 6 to October 11 2025, assign one external reviewer.**
 - This applies to submissions that were not desk or early rejected.
 - Recruit one external reviewer through PCS. Do not recruit committee members. Check the reviewer doesn't have an obvious conflict of interest. Please also ensure the reviewer is an expert in the field. It is always better to recruit external reviewers you know and trust and who are experts in the paper topic rather than recruiting unknown reviewers suggested by the system.
 - Recruit external reviewers promptly to give them as much time as possible to do their review.
- **You do not have to provide a full review of the submission.**
- **The external reviews are due on November 6 2025.**
- **From November 7 to November 9 2025, check reviews.**
 - Missing reviews: contact the reviewer for any missing reviews; if no response within 24h, actively look for an extra reviewer, or provide your own review; a paper should have three reviews.

- Check reviews: check that reviews are adequate, respectful, informative; please contact reviewers if this is not the case, explaining what has to be improved.
- **From November 10 → 16 to November 21 → 23 2025, lead discussion, write meta-review.**
 - Initiate and shepherd discussion.
 - Outcomes are: Conditional Accept or Reject
 - The goal of the discussion phase is to find a consensus on whether a submission can be accepted as a conference paper or not.
 - Write the meta-review; see guidelines below.
 - Select one recommendation.
- **For a submission for which you serve as a 2AC (aka secondary)**
 - **From September 17 to September 24 2025, hidden conflict of interest**
 - See above
 - **From September 17 to September 24 2025, desk rejection**
 - If contacted by the 1AC, check the submission for desk rejection, see above.
 - **From September 17 to October 1 2025, full review for possible early rejection**
 - If you do not recommend that the submission be desk rejected, start the full review.
 - If your score is 2.0 or below, contact the 1AC for them to review the submission.
 - If the 1AC performs a full review and their score is 2.0 or below, the 1AC will early reject the submission.
 - A submission without two full reviews will automatically advance to the full review stage, i.e., it will not be early rejected.
 - **From October 6 to October 11 2025, assign one external reviewer.**
 - See above
 - **From November 10 → 16 to November 21 → 23 2025, participate in the discussion.**

4. Instructions for Assigning Reviewers in PCS

In order to ease the process of making your assignments, we have populated the volunteer reviewer pool as much as we could. PCS uses the automatic matching score to sort the reviewers, yet, if the reviewers did not provide their sample papers the matching score will not be accurate. Thus, we advise you to carefully check your assignments, reading paper abstracts, and checking the related work section. It is

always better to recruit external reviewers you know and trust and who are experts in the paper topic rather than recruiting unknown reviewers suggested by the system.

Here are instructions on how to assign reviews in PCS.

Under the Reviews tab, click on "Review (as a committee member)" beside "IEEE VR 2025 Papers".

- For submissions listed under "Submissions to Review," you cannot assign reviewers. You should provide a review for these.
- For submissions listed under "Submissions to Coordinate," you can assign reviewers as follows:
 1. Click on the submission title.
 2. You can click on "Show potential reviewers" and pick a person from a list of reviewers. The list can be sorted by clicking on the column headers. Using shift-click on a column header does a secondary sort on that column when items in the primary column are equal. See the Help at the upper-right of the table.

-- OR --

You can type the reviewer name or email address in the "Assign reviewer" box. The system will show a list of matching people who already have accounts in the system.

- If the person's name is there, select it and click "Continue".
 - If the person's name is not there, click "Continue" without selecting anything. A box will pop up in which you can select a person with a similar name who has an existing account, or can enter the person's name and email address to create a new account.
 - **DO NOT CREATE DUPLICATE ACCOUNTS.** If the person has an account but the email is different than what you expect, use the existing account. Afterward, tell the person that their email in the system should be updated. **IF YOU CREATE DUPLICATE ACCOUNTS, THE PERSON WILL HAVE TO SPEND TIME CONSOLIDATING THEM LATER.**
3. On the next page, you have the opportunity to send email to the newly-assigned reviewer. If you do not send email, you should inform the reviewer of the assignment in some other manner. Your email can be a NOTICE or an INVITATION. If the email contains "accept link" and "decline link", it is an INVITATION and the reviewer will be marked as "tentative" until they click one of the links. If the email does not contain these links, it is a NOTICE and the reviewer will not have the opportunity to decline the assignment.

5. Guidelines for meta-reviews by 1AC

The following guidelines outline the content of a high-quality meta-review. The section is for primary coordinators (1ACs) and explains the content the chairs believe supports a decision best.

- Describe the primary contribution of the paper.
- Summarize the most significant pros and cons of the paper. The most critical are often those the majority of reviewers highlight in their reviews. Abstain from reiterating every single aspect - we have the reviews for that.
- Explain the decision along with the pros and cons that support this decision.
- In the event of conditional acceptance, clearly describe the conditions the authors have to meet before the paper can be accepted.
- In the event the paper is rejected, add suggestions for improvement.
- Include discussion details when they have helped reviewers change their assessment of the manuscript.

Mind that the authors will see the meta-review with the final decision. Be constructive and explain rather more than less, especially in the case the authors receive an unfavorable decision. Very often, the research or paper might simply not be quite ready at the time of submission. Invite the authors to re-submit next year if feasible, and provide feedback that will help guide them toward a successful resubmission.

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