

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS WITH MANUSCRIPTS

(general information for authors and referees)

The following are descriptions of some common editorial difficulties with manuscripts submitted to the *Proceedings*. A paper with one or more of these problems will often be (and should be) recommended for rejection by a referee, even if it represents interesting mathematics and seems otherwise acceptable, unless it is an exceptionally strong paper.

(1) The abstract and introduction might not be informative enough. As stated in its back pages, the *Proceedings* is for papers that are “nontrivial and significant and are of interest to a substantial number of mathematicians.” The abstract and introduction should make it clear, even to a non-expert, why the paper satisfies these criteria.

(2) The paper might be too specialized for a general journal. In this case it is often suggested that it be sent, instead, to a specialist journal. There are several reasons why a paper could appear too specialized. It could be because the abstract and introduction are too technical and use too many specialized symbols. It could be that the definitions and statements of the main results are written in a style that only a specialist in the immediate area would appreciate. It could be that the paper contains too many mathematical statements with many symbols and few words, and simply looks as if it would be very hard to read, and perhaps hard to referee.

(3) A paper which has a high proportion of exposition without proofs (a low “proof” content) will usually not be publishable in *PAMS*. Such a paper, while it can be interesting to a wide audience, will usually not be deep enough, hard enough, or significant enough for the *Proceedings*. Similarly, a paper with proofs which are not hard given the definitions and known results will usually not be publishable. A paper should contain new nontrivial results with proofs which have some genuine substance to them.

(4) The task of choosing a referee for the paper may be too difficult, and this can be the fault of the author. This often happens when the reference list for the paper contains no relevant recent (within the last 5 years) articles by well-known mathematicians other than the authors and their collaborators. If a potential referee does not want to do the job but cannot suggest a suitable alternate referee, this is often the problem. It is also evidence that the paper may have insufficient interest to be published in the *Proceedings*.

(5) There might be a large number of spelling and grammatical errors. While a referee will often help to some extent, a referee cannot be expected to make a large number of these corrections for an author. An editor usually does not have the time. The author should try to get help from a language expert, if necessary, **before** submitting it for refereeing.

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