

Advice for AAEM editors: Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments section

The Acknowledgments section may be missing from some manuscripts you edit. Here's the boilerplate text you can insert to get the authors started on writing this section:

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the ___name of funding institution, department, center, etc.___. We thank ___name of person or institution___ for ___type of help or support___ and ___your name___ (AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean) for improving the use of English in the manuscript.

Your name along with a mention of AAEM should appear in the manuscripts you edit. The authors know AAEM should be thanked. The specific wording is of course up to you.

If you meet the target journal's requirements for authorship (which is unlikely but not impossible), you should liaise with the author to ensure that your name is included in the list of authors in the manuscript.

How to acknowledge your contribution

Especially for biomed journals, it's expected that the exact nature of the editing work done by the author's editor will be described in precise terms. Please don't hesitate to tell the plain truth about what you contributed.

Some journal editors have become suspicious of the phrase "editorial assistance" because they assume that this disguises a much deeper level of involvement such as writing the first draft, which is what a medical writer might do but is something most author's editors would not undertake. Copyeditors, manuscript editors and apparently most readers, on the other hand, apparently assume that "editorial assistance" means language editing and proofreading to fix grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

Since "editorial assistance" has no standard definition in functional terms, it's best to simply describe as clearly as possible what you actually did. Some possible descriptions are:

No.	Text used in the Acknowledgments	Type of editing
1	Checking the English in the manuscript	Correcting misspellings, typos and punctuation
2	Improving the use of English in the manuscript	- Correcting grammar and syntax errors Shortening long sentences - Editing sentences to improve the "logical flow" of ideas - Moving the topic sentence of a paragraph to the beginning of the paragraph
3	Improving the organization	- Suggesting deletions and additions

	of the text	- Moving sentences or paragraphs around
4	Improving the use of English in and organization of the text	Perhaps the most common combination of editing tasks we do
5	Improving the reporting of the findings	- Checking compliance with the research methodology checklists on the Equator website http://www.equator-network.org/resource-centre/library-of-health-research-reporting/ - Pointing out where the methods, results, tables and figures need to be improved - Suggesting tables and figures that could be deleted, or that are not in the manuscript but should be
6	Editorial suggestions OR feedback OR advice on an earlier version of the manuscript	Pre-submittal peer-review or expert review, if your subject expertise allows you to provide feedback about the actual scientific content and reasoning
7	Suggesting some relevant references	You may discover recent relevant publications in the course of your checks for terminology and appropriate scientific usage. It's helpful to pass on the links to these articles to the authors in case they wish to read and cite these publications.

Permission to be named

A few journals require written permission from each person named in the Acknowledgements, so it's good to have a form letter prepared for this. The letter should show your full professional contact details (name, name of business, address, phone, fax, email, website and logo).

It's best to print out the letter when the details have been filled in, sign it, scan it, and send the authors the pdf file. Or you can give the authors the original hard copy, although most journals will not want the piece of paper and will just want a pdf file, so the authors will need to scan it anyway.

Some journals will not start the manuscript through the peer review process until the editorial office has all the ethics paperwork in hand, so the permission-to-name letters usually need to be submitted at the same time as the manuscript. For one manuscript I edited several months ago, review actually was delayed while the editorial office waited for my permission-to-name letter to arrive, so it's something that should be done for the author professionally and promptly.

Here's a form letter you can adapt and use as your permission-to-name letter.

Permission to be named in the Acknowledgments

As the author's editor who helped the authors edit the manuscript to improve the use of English and ensure compliance with the ICMJE Uniform Requirements, I hereby give my permission to the authors for my name to appear in the Acknowledgments section of

the manuscript titled **Title of the ms**, which will be submitted to *Full, unabbreviated name of the journal*.

I was not involved in the design of the study, collection or analysis of the data, or the writing the manuscript. I will be happy to answer any questions the editors may have regarding the nature of my contribution to this manuscript.

Signed:

Date:

(Your contact details)