

How to write a great Rebuttal ?

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Sources

Most advices come from Wendy Mackay.

<http://palblog.fxpal.com/?p=5001>

Outline

What

Why

How

Step by step

What is a rebuttal?

What?

A rebuttal is a opportunity to:

1. Tell your side of your story and
2. What you believe is a false or inaccurate statements / assumptions in your reviews

Why to write a rebuttal?

Why?

Rebuttals matter

They show you have not given up

You have not conceded the reviewers' criticisms

Reviewers can get it

- wrong...
- right, but the flaws can be corrected

They help you articulate the merits of your work

Why?

Good rebuttals can not always save your paper
but **bad** rebuttals will probably kill your paper.

How to write a rebuttal?

How

Calm and rational response

Be factual (no rhetoric/invective)

Understand the big complaints

- Is there fatal flaws or aspects that can be corrected

Do not propose to run another experiment, but you might expand your data analysis

How?

Focus on the Associate chair

- S/he should highlight the important shortcomings
- S/he should address those will improve your chances of acceptance
- **S/He will decide to defend your paper or not**
(not reviewers)

How?

Emphasize what is important in your work

- Reviewers do not read articles as carefully as you'd like (lot of papers, doing others things,...)

How?

If reviewers think you are short on related work

- put in a paragraph or two that relate your work to the papers the reviewers suggested were missing

How?

Start by thanking reviewers

Highlight the main contributions agreed by reviewers

Set out points raised by reviewers (focus on the AC)

Focus on aspects you can change
(not things you can not correct)

How?

When you are done

- get someone impartial to read the reviews and your rebuttal
- ask them to comment on the tone as well as on the facts

Summary

Goal: Convince the meta (and the reviewers) that although as written your paper had some shortcomings, you are able to correct them if the paper gets accepted

It may be difficult to salvage a paper that requires a lot of re-writing

Demonstrate your ability to correct the problems by offering the solutions and persuade the reviewers that you can make the required changes.

Sticking to the facts and offering concrete evidence of your competence to make the changes

Rebuttal

Step by step

Day 1

All authors

Read the reviews and mark anything you agree / disagree with

If you disagree, **wait for** 24 hours before you start to respond

Day 2

Primary author

Other authors

Begin by rereading all the reviews

Turn the **Associate Chair's** review into a numbered list

You need to convince the AC to fight for your paper
=> focus on his/her comments

Day 2

Primary author

Other authors

Check the other reviews for details

=> **but focus on how they relate to the AC review**

Reread your paper, from the reviewer's perspective

=> **Mark any relevant sections and the critique number**

For each critique

- **Draft an initial response, including quotes from your paper**
- **Do not worry about length yet**

Send you annotated list of critiques to your co-authors

Choose a time to meet - usually in 24-48h

Day 2

Primary author

Other authors

Read the list of critiques

Identify what you think are the **most important**

Add comments

- Was the critique interpreted correctly?
- Do you have additional ideas on how to respond?
- Do you have specific wording suggestions?

Send your prioritized, annotated list to the primary author

Day 3

All authors

Prior to the meeting

- Someone should compile the annotated comments
- Everyone should reread the AC's review and the comments

Day 3

All authors

At the meeting

- Decide who is **responsible** for the concise form of the rebuttal
- Discuss the best approach to respond to each critique
 - => specific actions trump generalities
 - => if you disagree, say so, but politely and with justification
- It helps to think of the **AC** as an **advocate** for your paper, you are giving them reasons for them to argue on your behalf
- This is an excellent time to **discuss any legitimate critique**, so that you can **improve the paper**, whether for this round or the next.

Responsible

Day 3

After the meeting

- Ready to make a complete draft of the rebuttal
- Set aside some uninterrupted **quiet time**
- Space is limited, so **focus on your priorities**

Day 3

Responsible

Rebuttal

- Always begin by thanking the reviewers
- Highlight their positive comments
- Work through the critiques in order of priority

Remember

- Polite, factual rebuttals can save a paper
- Angry or snarky rebuttals will probably kill your paper
- If you do not write a rebuttal, it will be interpreted negatively and probably kill your paper

Day 3

Responsible

Rebuttal

- Send the rebuttal to your co-authors for comments
- If it is too long they should suggest what to cut
 - => reword to be concise
 - => remove or reduce less important items

Day 4

Once your co-authors are happy

=> find at least one non-author to review the rebuttal