

# Improving reproducibility of geospatial conference papers

## Lessons learned from a first implementation of reproducibility reviews

Daniel Nüst (AGILE 2020 Reproducibility Chair), Frank O. Ostermann, Carlos Granell, Alexander Kmoch (all Reproducibility Committee)

<https://doi.org/10.7557/5.5601>



<https://agile-online.org/>

AGILE council | annual conference | PhD schools | initiatives  
GIScience teaching/research @ European research agendas



<https://reproducible-agile.github.io/>

Workshops on reproducibility in 2017, 2018, 2019

Reproducible publications at AGILE conferences Initiative in 2019:  
guidelines AGILE reproducibility review 2020

# AGILE Reproducible Paper Guidelines: Contents & First Revision

# AGILE Reproducible Paper Guidelines



<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/CB7Z8>

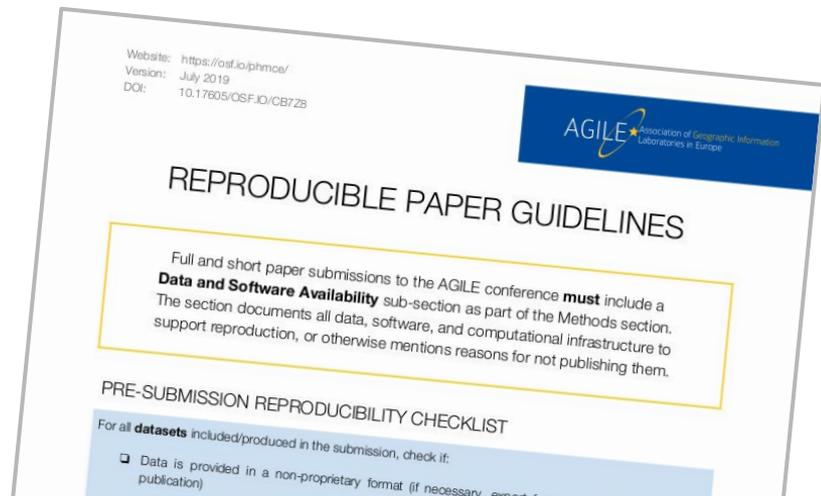
Created by AGILE Initiative in 2019, see report at <https://osf.io/hupxr/>

## Transparency & Reproducibility GIScience

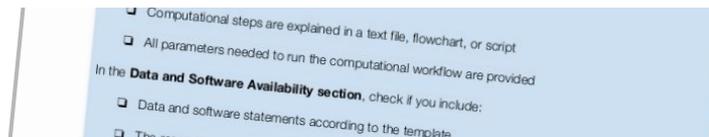
<https://osf.io/phmce/wiki/home/>

## Promotion

## Acknowledge spectrum



Full and short paper submissions to the AGILE conference **must** include a **Data and Software Availability** sub-section as part of the Methods section. The section documents all data, software, and computational infrastructure to support reproduction, or otherwise mentions reasons for not publishing them.



# The guidelines

<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/CB7Z8>

## Author guidelines

Data in Research Papers

Computational workflows

in Research Papers

Pre-submission checklist

Writing DASA section

Rationale/Motivation/Vision

Reviewer guidelines

Reproducibility reviewer guidelines (WIP)

## REPRODUCIBLE PAPER GUIDELINES

Full and short paper submissions to the AGILE conference **must** include a **Data and Software Availability** sub-section as part of the Methods section. The section documents all data, software, and computational infrastructure to support reproduction, or otherwise mentions reasons for not publishing them.

### PRE-SUBMISSION REPRODUCIBILITY CHECKLIST

For all **datasets** included/produced in the submission, check if:

- Data is provided in a non-proprietary format (if necessary, export from proprietary format for publication)
- Data is documented (at least description of collection query and field or column names, ideally using complete metadata following established standards)
- Data is accessible in a public repository
- Data has a clear licence

For any **software tool/library/package** used or produced, check if:

- Computational environment (including hardware) is documented or provided in the most appropriate format given its complexity
- The versions of relevant software components (libraries, packages) are provided
- Software is available in a public repository
- Software has a clear license
- Computational steps are explained in a text file, flowchart, or script
- All parameters needed to run the computational workflow are provided

In the **Data and Software Availability section**, check if you include:

- Data and software statements according to the template
- The reasons, if any, for not being able to share (parts of) data or code.

For properly **acknowledging data and software** by both you and others check that:

- All datasets and code used or mentioned are cited throughout the paper and included in the references with DOIs.

# The guidelines for reproducibility reviewers (WIP)

## Ideal vs. realistic

## Role

## Skills

## Do's & dont's

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Kc-ToUVcrdsq6aB8Qy2J\\_rlluFwDniv6GHGtZuPvIEo/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Kc-ToUVcrdsq6aB8Qy2J_rlluFwDniv6GHGtZuPvIEo/edit#)

## REPRODUCIBILITY REVIEWER GUIDELINES

Reproducibility reviewers conduct a complimentary review of the workflow that is published with a manuscript. Ideally, reproducibility reviewers only **read the abstract and the Data and Software Availability section (DASA)** of an article. They may read other sections referenced in the latter. Then they follow the authors' instructions for executing the workflow, ideally starting from the DASA or a README file in the referenced reproduction material. When reproducibility reviewers get stuck, they take advantage of the option to **communicate** with the authors early and often. Reproducibility reviewers should be aware of the different levels for making research reproducible in the author guidelines (see above) to be able to **recommend improvements** to the author and at the same time have the skilset and tools to conduct their review efficiently. Reproducibility reviewers are not responsible for making a workflow transparent or executable. Reproducibility reviewers **write a short reproducibility report** documenting their communication and the results of their reproduction attempt. The report is published if the reproduction was, at least in part, successful.

### The reproducibility review from a reproducibility reviewer's perspective

Do	Don't
Quick pre-repro-review checks and ask authors to fix before continuing; even if not all of these are technically required, authors who are willing to work reproducibly can show their engagement right from the start: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Do the links to data sets and materials resolve?</li><li>2. Is there a README with clear step-by-step instructions?</li><li>3. Is there a clear mention of to be expected execution times?</li><li>4. Is there a LICENSE file to ensure openness?</li></ol>	Dig across badly or un-documented collections of files and functions to identify which part of the code/data creates which figure/table/output; find or build the "start button" yourself.
Encourage authors by pointing out promising intermediate results or concrete benefits of reproducibility.	Run workflows requiring considerable computational resources (unless interesting for you) but ask for data subsets for demonstration purposes.
Accept sample datasets to run a workflow and compare the outcome with the expected sample results; check the sources of the full datasets, if available.	Accept private sharing of data or code, unless strictly required for protection of sensitive data. All changes by the author should update to the public reproduction material.
Clearly document the extent of the reproduction in your reproduction report and suggest potential improvements; if you provide intermediate feedback, to include a history of your interactions in the report so that the ideas you contributed are preserved when the submission's material is improved.	Attempt to install software without any instructions, install binary software of unknown origin, or try to fix installation problems you encounter on your machine; try to install without (a) asking for help from a fellow reproducibility reviewer who is familiar with the software, or (b) asking the author to help, providing a minimal reproducible example of your problem.
Get in touch with fellow reproducibility reviewers if specific expertise (tool, programming language, ...) is needed.	Point out or even fix problems that are not specific to the submission, e.g., general problems in a software tool.
Set an example when communicating about computational problems, e.g., by clearly defining your system (OS version, language version, etc.)	Create accounts on any service or platform to access code, data, or other resources.
Ask specific questions or point out concrete problems that may lead authors to improve their material, and give references to the guidelines or examples.	Fix anything (unless you really enjoy doing so), e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• compiler problems,</li></ul>

eventually have 100% of is positive encouragement, is a clear definition of your view is an extra merit for an The reproducibility reviewer for not to "go the extra few lected in the fact that only be both the reproducibility

ules and the CODECHECK :conducting a reproducibility it all of them, should still be e. Please consult with your

is and part of a process for idelines do not mention a t are just as unique as the my problem" if you cannot and don't spend more than r documentation should be honing are all the different da and venv for Python, Docker.

# Reproducibility Review at AGILE Conference 2020

# Review process

Proceedings:

[https://www.agile-giscience-series.net/review\\_process.html](https://www.agile-giscience-series.net/review_process.html)

Process documentation:

<https://osf.io/7rjpe/>

Reproducibility review *after* accept/reject

decisions, triggered by regular reviewer

Reproducibility review & communication

Community conference & coronavirus

Badges on proceedings page

Presentation at conference

The screenshot displays the AGILE GIScience Series website interface. At the top, it identifies the journal as 'AGILE GIScience Series' and 'Open-access proceedings of the Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe'. The current issue is 'Volume 1, 2020 | 23rd AGILE Conference on Geographic Information Science'. The article featured is 'Window Operators for Processing Spatio-Temporal Data Streams on Unmanned Vehicles' by Tobias Werner and Thomas Brinkhoff, published on 15 July 2020. The article is marked as 'reproducible' with a badge. The website also features a search bar, navigation menus, and a list of other articles in the volume, such as 'Which to Follow? A Comparison of Walking Routes Computed Based on Social Media Photos from Different Types of Contributors' and 'Creation of a Model for Estimating the Home-returns Rate of Excavates Using Mobile Phone Movement Histories and Its Application to the Nankai Trough Earthquake'.

# Reproducibility review results

## 6 reproducibility reports published

## 16 not possible/not attempted

(5 of which after communication with authors):

- **no starting point** in the paper
- **documentation insufficient** for third party
- **sensitive/confidential/commercial data**
- **proprietary** software
- software paper
- (conceptual papers)

■ Reproducibility review of:  
Integrating cellular automata and  
discrete global grid systems: a case  
study into wildfire modelling  
Nüst  
Reproduction report and material.

■ Reproducibility review of: Extracting  
interrogative intents and concepts  
from geo-analytic questions  
Nüst  
Reproduction report and material.

■ Reproducibility review of: Tracking  
Hurricane Dorian in GDELT and  
Twitter  
Ostermann & Nüst  
Reproduction report and material.

■ Reproducibility Review of:  
Comparing supervised learning  
algorithms for Spatial Nominal Entity  
recognition  
Ostermann & Nüst  
Reproduction report and material.

■ Reproducibility review of: Window  
Operators for Processing Spatio-  
Temporal Data Streams on Unmanned  
Vehicles  
Nüst & Ostermann  
Reproduction report and material.

■ Reproducibility review of: What to  
do in the Meantime: A Service  
Coverage Analysis for Parked  
Autonomous Vehicles  
Nüst & Granell  
Reproduction report and material.





# Reproducibility review reports



Reproducibility review of: Window Operators for Processing Spatio-Temporal Data Streams on Unmanned Vehicles

Daniel Nüst , Frank O. Ostermann

2020-07-13



This report is part of the reproducibility review of the paper <https://reproducible-agile.github.io/>, cite the report use

Nüst, D., & Ostermann, F. O. (2020). Window Operators for Processing Spatio-Temporal Data Streams on Unmanned Vehicles. *17605/OSF.IO/7TWR2*

## Reviewed paper

Tobias Werner and Thomas Brinkmann. Window Operators for Processing Spatio-Temporal Data Streams on Unmanned Vehicles. *17605/OSF.IO/7TWR2*, 2020.

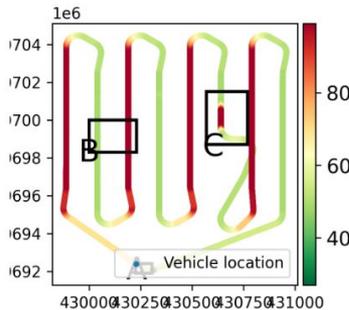
## Summary

The reproduction was successful. Based on the original anonymous submission, I extended the original anonymous submission with the test cases provided functions.

## Plots

The following plots were created with these function calls (prepending pipenv environment). Where a file save command was missing, the plots were saved. *seems to be a data-based plot but the code is missing.*

Plot density track (Fig. 2), `pipenv run python plot_density_track.py`



Reproducibility review of: What to do in the Meantime: A Service Coverage Analysis for Parked Autonomous Vehicles

Daniel Nüst , Carlos Granell

2020-07-13

This report is part of the reproducibility review of the paper <https://reproducible-agile.github.io/>, cite the report use

Nüst, Daniel, and Carlos Granell. What to do in the Meantime: A Service Coverage Analysis for Parked Autonomous Vehicles. *17605/OSF.IO/5SVMT*

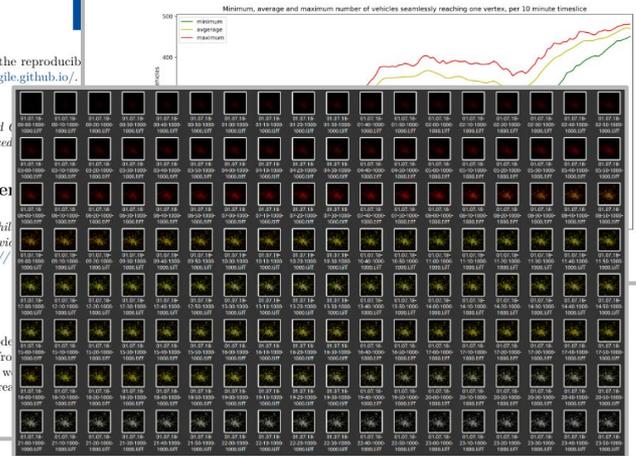
## Reviewed paper

Steffen Mliun, Philipp Mliun, and Carlos Granell. What to do in the Meantime: A Service Coverage Analysis for Parked Autonomous Vehicles. *17605/OSF.IO/5SVMT*, 2020.

## Summary

The paper data and code were provided. With some directions from the trial and error process, we were able to reproduce the paper results.

This created the file `images/analysis-01.07.18-02.07.19.png` shown below, which seems to loosely match (to be expected due to sampling) a panel of Fig. 2. Confusing is that the created plots is labeled as “vehicles seamlessly reaching one vertex”, whereas the Fig. 2 is described in the text as “vehicles reaching all available vertices”.





*Independent execution of computations  
underlying research articles.*

## CODECHECK Register

Certificate	Repository	Type	Issue	Report	Check date
2020-001	<a href="#">codecheckers/Piccolo-2020</a>	journal (GigaScience)	NA	<a href="http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3674056">http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3674056</a>	2019-02-14
2020-002	<a href="#">codecheckers/Reproduction-Hancock</a>	community	2	<a href="http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3750741">http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3750741</a>	2020-04-13
2020-003	<a href="#">codecheckers/Hopfield-1982</a>	community	1	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3741797">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3741797</a>	2020-04-06
2020-004	<a href="#">codecheckers/Barto-Sutton-Anderson-1983</a>	community	4	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3827371">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3827371</a>	2020-05-14
2020-005	<a href="#">codecheckers/Larisch-reproduction</a>	community	5	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3959175">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3959175</a>	2020-07-23
2020-006	<a href="#">codecheckers/Detorakis-reproduction</a>	community	6	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3948353">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3948353</a>	2020-07-16
2020-007	<a href="#">codecheckers/Hathway-Goodman-2018</a>	community	7	NA	NA
2020-008	<a href="#">codecheckers/covid-uk</a>	community (preprint)	8	<a href="http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3746024">http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3746024</a>	2020-04-09
2020-009	<a href="#">codecheckers/2020-cov-tracing</a>	community (preprint)	9	<a href="http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3767060">http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3767060</a>	2020-04-26
2020-010	<a href="#">codecheckers/covid-report9</a>	community (preprint)	14	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3865491">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3865491</a>	2020-05-29
2020-011	<a href="#">codecheckers/covid19model-nature</a>	community (in press)	18	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3893138">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3893138</a>	2020-06-13
2020-012	<a href="#">codecheckers/covid19model-report23</a>	community (preprint)	19	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3893617">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3893617</a>	2020-06-14
2020-013	<a href="#">codecheckers/Spitschan2020_bioRxiv</a>	community (preprint)	20	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3947959">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3947959</a>	2020-07-14

2020-018	<a href="#">reproducible-agile/AGILECA</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/ZTC7M">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/ZTC7M</a>	2020-07-13
2020-019	<a href="#">5SVMT</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/5SVMT">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/5SVMT</a>	2020-07-13
2020-020	<a href="#">7TWR2</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7TWR2">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7TWR2</a>	2020-07-13
2020-021	<a href="#">reproducible-agile/Spatial-nominal-entity-recognition</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/SUWPJ">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/SUWPJ</a>	2020-07-13
2020-022	<a href="#">7XRQG</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7XRQG">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7XRQG</a>	2020-07-13
2020-023	<a href="#">reproducible-agile/Tracking-Hurricane-Dorian-in-GDELTA-and-Twitter</a>	conference (AGILEGIS)	25	<a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/XS5YR">https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/XS5YR</a>	2020-07-13

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CODECHECK is a process for independent execution of computations underlying scholarly research articles.

<https://codecheck.org.uk/register/>

## Overall

- Saw full spectrum of reproducibility
- Compared to previous years' submissions, the guidelines and increased community awareness markedly **improved reproducibility**
- 5/6 reproduced papers have DASA; all embrace guidelines
- Reproducibility reports with many **recommendations** for improvement, well received by authors, even included in revision before publication > reward!
- Good practices spread slowly
- Process

## Challenges for reproducibility reviewer:

- Inconsistencies (identifiers, links) between paper and code
- Lack of connections between artefacts (code <> figure)
- Workspaces layout: no documentation, absolute paths
- Unknown runtime and no demo subsets of data
- No guidance on efforts and stop points

*All efforts beyond mere workflow execution*



## How to put your community on a path towards more reproducibility in 5 easy hard steps

1. Build a team of enthusiasts (workshop, social events)
2. Assess the current state and raise awareness (workshop, paper)
3. Institutional support (🙏 AGILE Council 🙏 + committee chairs)
4. Positive encouragement (no reproduction != bad science)
5. Keep at it!

# Next steps



**Do it again in 2021** 🎉

**Revise guidelines** 🛠️ 🇮🇹 🇫🇷 🇨🇳

**Grow reproducibility reviewer team**

ECRs, credit @ ORCID, skills

**Continue research** 🔍

Ostermann, F., Nüst, D., Granell, C., Hofer, B., & Konkol, M. (2020). *Reproducible Research and GIScience: an evaluation using GIScience conference papers*. EarthArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31223/x5zk5v>

**Continue community engagement towards opening scholarship**

Scope

Requirements

Acceptance condition?

Open review if tenured

Format-free submission

...



# Bonus slides

# The guidelines for data



## DATA IN RESEARCH PAPERS

	Minimum	Ideal
<b>What?</b>	Publish all input data + data description / documentation	Publish all data and adhere to standardised, discipline-specific metadata <sup>2</sup> to describe your data
<b>Where?</b>	Use a data repository providing a DOI <sup>3</sup>	Use a discipline-specific repository <sup>4</sup> with a DOI
<b>How?</b>	Use open data formats + specify a license	Make your data FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and as open as possible

“What if...” and Examples (not shown)

# The guidelines for workflows



Examples (not shown)

## COMPUTATIONAL WORKFLOWS IN RESEARCH PAPERS

	Minimum	Intermediate	Ideal
<b>What?</b> Computational environment	Describe the environment and computational infrastructure, e.g. computer specs, operating system + software versions	Provide live documents (structured configuration files with dependency information, e.g. a Binder <sup>9</sup> )	Provide the actual environment, e.g. a container created by a Dockerfile <sup>10</sup> or a Virtual Machine (VM, e.g. OSGeo-Live)
Computation steps	Document the detailed steps in a text file and/or flowchart (every action/click)	Provide scripts / models and a README file that explains their use	Provide a software package with structured metadata <sup>11</sup> , tests/CI <sup>12</sup> , and an automated workflow <sup>13</sup> + If applicable: Add link to running instance of software
<b>Where?</b>	Repository providing a DOI, such as Zenodo, OSF, b2share, or FigShare		Minimum + versioned code repository, such as GitHub or GitLab
<b>How?</b> Tools used	Use generally available proprietary tools (avoid tools that are not available to reviewers and other researchers)		Use (and create) open source tools; cite core modules/tools/language used, including your own
Development practices	Use clear licenses <sup>14</sup> that fit your environment	Follow “Good enough practices” for scientific computing software <sup>15</sup>	Use development guidelines for your environment / language of choice (e.g. for R <sup>16</sup> )

# The guidelines for reproducibility reviewers (WIP)

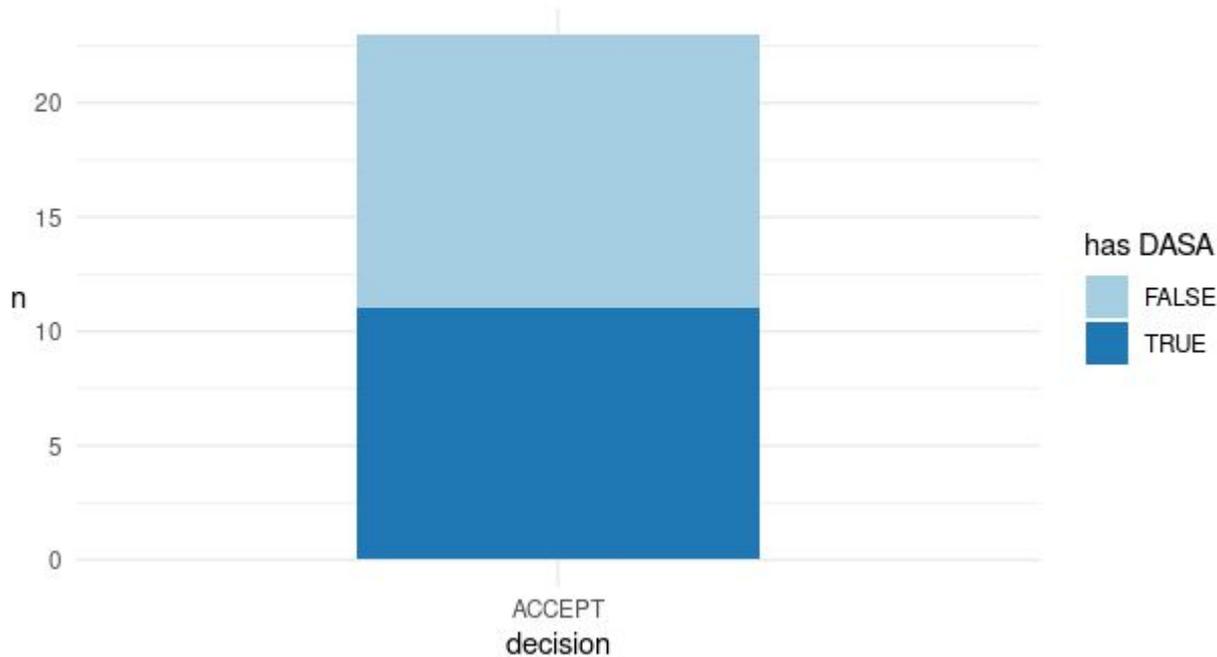
## Examples for “Do’s and Don’ts”:

- Do shift burden to author
- Do encourage and set examples
- Do *not* accept private data sharing
- Document your work in report (impact)
- Be kind (career stage, knowledge, privileges)
- No rummaging

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Kc-ToUVcrdsq6aB8Qy2J\\_rlluFwDniv6GHGtZuPvIEo/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Kc-ToUVcrdsq6aB8Qy2J_rlluFwDniv6GHGtZuPvIEo/edit#)

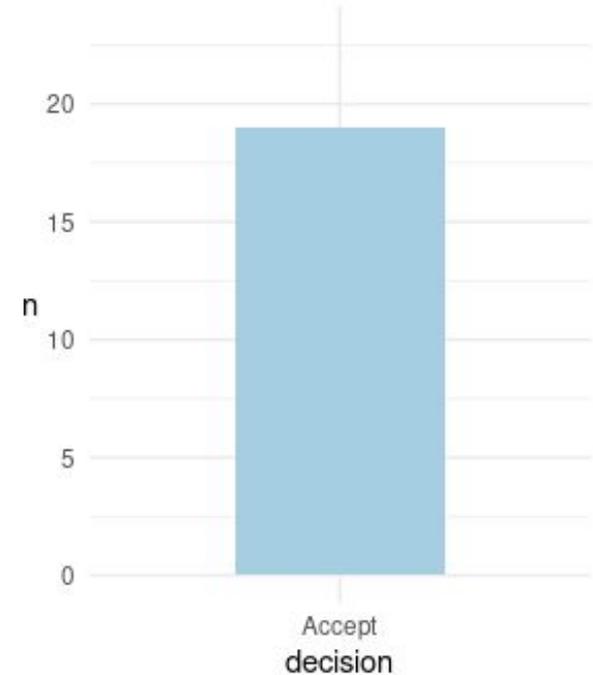
Do	Don't
Quick pre-repro-review checks and ask authors to fix before continuing; even if not all of these are technically required, authors who are willing to work reproducibly can show their engagement right from the start: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Do the links to data sets and materials resolve?</li><li>2. Is there a README with clear step-by-step instructions?</li><li>3. Is there a clear mention of to be expected execution times?</li><li>4. Is there a LICENSE file to ensure openness?</li></ol>	Dig across badly or un-documented collections of files and functions to identify which part of the code/data creates which figure/table/output; find or build the “start button” yourself.
Encourage authors by pointing out promising intermediate results or concrete benefits of reproducibility.	Run workflows requiring considerable computational resources (unless interesting for you) but ask for data subsets for demonstration purposes.
Accept sample datasets to run a workflow and compare the outcome with the expected sample results; check the sources of the full datasets, if available.	Accept private sharing of data or code, unless strictly required for protection of sensitive data. All changes by the author should update to the public reproduction material.
Clearly document the extent of the reproduction in your reproduction report and suggest potential improvements; if you provide intermediate feedback, to include a history of your interactions in the report so that the ideas you contributed are preserved when the submission’s material is improved.	Attempt to install software without any instructions, install binary software of unknown origin, or try to fix installation problems you encounter on your machine; try to install without (a) asking for help from a fellow reproducibility reviewer who is familiar with the software, or (b) asking the author to help, providing a minimal reproducible example of your problem.
Get in touch with fellow reproducibility reviewers if specific expertise (tool, programming language, ..) is needed.	Point out or even fix problems that are not specific to the submission, e.g., general problems in a software tool.
Set an example when communicating about computational problems, e.g., by clearly defining your system (OS version, language version, etc.)	Create accounts on any service or platform to access code, data, or other resources.
Ask specific questions or point out concrete problems that may lead authors to improve their material, including referencing these guidelines or concrete tools/methods that you already (!) know about, especially if you suspect that the author might now be familiar with them (e.g., version pinning/dependency management, absolute paths).	Fix anything (unless you really enjoy doing so), e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● compiler problems,</li><li>● outdated libraries,</li><li>● broken paths, or</li><li>● incomplete computing environment specifications,</li></ul> especially if the author can fix them even quicker.
Make sure that you are aware of any templates or specific resources provided for reproducibility reviewers from the reproducibility committee chair before starting your review.	
Consider the author’s background, career stage, and position to be aware of (a lack of) privileges or institutional power to decide how much support you provide and how you communicate; your reproducibility review can be a contribution to improve equity and inclusion in academia.	Be a <a href="#">bro</a> .

## AGILE 2020 Submissions: Transparency & Reproducibility Data and Software Availability Sections (DASA) across full papers



**0%** of rejected papers have a DASA section (correlation, not cause)  
**48%** of accepted full papers have DASA section

## AGILE 2019 Submissions DASA sections in full paper submissions



*Reproducible research and GIScience:  
an evaluation using AGILE conference  
papers*

<https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.5072>