

EDITORIAL

 **Data Availability Principles and Practice**

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KEYWORD: Editorial

Science requires evidence. Making data available lets other scientists confirm results, uncover errors, or find new insights. Moreover, gathering data can be expensive and time consuming. Since the same data can be used for a range of purposes, making data available can be an efficient use of limited research resources. Doing so can also improve traceability and, thus, accountability, when it comes to research findings.

These reasons and more lie behind recent efforts to promote data availability in research publications. The American Meteorological Society (AMS) recently updated its data policy guidelines (<https://www.ametsoc.org/index.cfm/ams/publications/ethical-guidelines-and-ams-policies/data-policy-and-guidelines/>) to require, among other things, that papers in its journals include a Data Availability Statement. Data do not need to be “open.” Authors simply need to explain how to find and use the data or why, in some circumstances, the data are not available.

Papers that appear in *Weather and Forecasting* (WAF) often involve very large datasets, not all of which are publically available. Other papers may include social science data, which require different treatment owing to confidentiality considerations. We do not wish to impose a “one-size-fits-all” requirement, which may serve as a barrier to authors. In fact, one of our goals in this endeavor is to ensure that no papers go unpublished as a result of this new AMS requirement.

The Data Availability Statement need not be long, and the statement does not count toward the word count limit. If data are for some reason unavailable, authors must make a good-faith effort to explain the circumstances. See the AMS example statements to gain a sense of expectations. Our editors are willing to work with authors to accommodate any difficulties or unique situations.

Thoughtful data availability requirements such as AMS’s benefit both the scientific community and society. Consistent policies and practices can help reduce misunderstanding and divergent interpretations. While the data availability requirement should not be an obstacle to publication, at the same time, authors should not use exceptions to making data available as a way to evade their responsibilities. We encourage authors and readers of WAF to read the AMS data policy and to contact us with any questions or concerns.

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