

# How to write a paper?

## Key messages

- Provide a carefully crafted abstract as this is the first impression of your work
- Show awareness of published literature in the field
- State your aim clearly
- Describe your methodology in a way that others can reproduce the work if needed
- Communicate your results clearly and provide discussion in the context of what was already known and what your paper adds
- Highlight what your study adds in the discussion section. Do not forget limitations of your work. Make sure your conclusion is grounded in the findings you present
- Have your manuscript professionally formatted and proof-read before submission, make sure your tables and figures are well formatted
- Check journal requirements

## Introduction

Writing a journal article requires several careful considerations in making sure that you can communicate your research in the best possible way and to satisfy the editors, reviewers and subsequent readers. Keep in mind that your readers are not always specialists in your field, you need to strike a balance in your method of communication, particularly also considering the word limit, space constraints and specific requirements of the target journal for formatting of tables, figures and other additional materials.

It is always a good idea not to wait to commence drafting a journal manuscript until you have completed your study. Much of the introduction and methods sections can be written while the research is being conducted.

## Top tips

1. Choose an appropriate journal (impact factor, scope and whether the journal has published papers in your field in the past.)
2. Read carefully the author's instructions of the journal (maximum number of words in total / per chapter, maximum number of figures (incl. tables), reference style, etc.)
3. Write an impactful title that describes what you have done.
4. Use appropriate keywords so that your research can be retrieved in searches for other researchers to use/cite.
5. Your abstract is the first impression that you will make to the editors. Decisions to proceed manuscript to the peer review process are often based on the information in the abstract. Good abstracts also interest good reviewers as they get to see your abstract before making a decision to accept or decline a review invitation from the journals.
6. Use journal formatting requirements when writing the abstract and be concise and precise in your write up giving a clear summary of your project.

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on behalf of the ESCP Research Committee

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7. Provide a clear and concise aim/hypothesis and methodology of your paper (study design and setting (study population)). Make sure that the results and discussion you provide in the abstract (and the manuscript) follow the aim.
8. Write up the introduction of the paper and make sure that you provide a compelling narrative of:
  - a. why is the topic important?
  - b. what is already known about the topic and what is not known? Please show awareness of key published literature including recent literature in your area including any systematic reviews
  - c. what aspect is innovative in your study?
  - d. what are the objectives of your study? Don't be too broad, focus on what you can show with your results!
9. Write up the methods
  - a. Provide a reproducible (for others to conduct the study if needed) description of your methods
  - b. Have a methodology expert on board as per the nature of the research where possible e.g. qualitative or statistical expertise allowing you to make sure that your methods and results are communicated in the correct way.
  - c. Refer to standard guidelines for undertaking the methodology. For instance PRISMA guideline for systematic reviews, COREQ for reporting qualitative studies, CONSORT for reporting randomised controlled trials etc. Do not forget to refer to any published protocols from your study. See EQUATOR Network to identify relevant reporting guidelines.
  - d. Provide ethical review and approval details with study reference numbers.
10. Write up the results
  - a. Be clear and concise.
  - b. You can use the advantage of providing information on results also in tables, figures, appendixes.
  - c. Don't repeat the content of tables and figures in the text- provide a good summary instead. Remember to cross reference all tables and figures in the text.
  - d. Please follow standard approach to reporting statistical, quantitative or qualitative data (e.g. summary measures, p values).
  - e. Every tables, graph, appendix etc. must be self-explanatory, means titles, legends, explanation of abbreviations etc. must be clearly written and understandable.
  - f. Reserve any interpretations of the results for your discussion section.
11. Write the discussion
  - a. Commence with your study aim so that you can be focused.
  - b. Provide a clear summary of your results
  - c. Provide interpretation of your results in the context of published literature. Compare your results with those of similar studies. Try to explain why you found different or similar results.
  - d. Describe how your results will influence practice and what needs to be done further
  - e. What are the future research needs?- be grounded in your results throughout.
  - f. Do not provide information in the discussion section that you cannot relate to your study findings
  - g. What are the limitations of the study (for example regarding study design, outcome measurements, study population, sample size, selection bias)?
  - h. What are the strengths of your study?- Do not over-emphasise your strengths.
  - i. Provide a clear, compelling conclusion and do not go beyond your results. Your results may not be generalisable to other study

populations. If you extrapolate your results, use words such as 'maybe'. It is good to have one sentence on further work needed.

12. Structure your text. If the author's instructions did not demand a specific structure or subheadings you can use the IMRAD format (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion).

### **Final checklist**

1. Is the language clear and precise?- where possible please have it proof read by a fluent English (or the chosen language) speaker
2. Are there smooth transitions between sections?
3. Is the text in a logic order and well structured?
4. Did you explain every abbreviation used in the paper?
5. Are the tables and figures in the right order?
6. Are the referencing and citations properly done and in accordance with the author's instructions for the journal?
7. Do a final word count check.

### **Guidelines**

Equator network for reporting guidelines specific to a research. Available: <https://www.equator-network.org/>

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals. Available: <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>