

Practical skills: 'How to' articles

These author guidelines will help you submit a 'How to' article for publication in the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals. Separate guidelines are available for general clinical articles, research articles, continuing professional development (CPD) articles, CPD modules, 'How to' modules and the journal Nurse Researcher. For further information on publishing with RCNi go to rcni.com/publish-article-with-rcni

Please note that your article must be submitted to one journal ONLY, whether published by RCNi or any other company. Submission to more than one journal will not increase your chances of publication. Editors will not consider articles that have been submitted or published elsewhere.

Purpose

The main purpose of the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals is to support nurses to improve patient care through evidence-based nursing. 'How to' articles describe clinical procedures commonly performed by nurses to support them to keep their practice up to date and evidence based. For an overview of RCNi's journals go to rcni.com/publish-article-with-rcni

Peer review and accreditation

'How to' articles submitted for publication in the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals are peer reviewed. Most RCNi journals use double-blind peer review.

Structure

'How to' articles have no introduction or conclusion and must contain the following sections:

- » **Rationale and key points:** a short rationale for the article (maximum 100 words) followed by three to five key points.
- » **Reflective activity:** two sentences prompting readers to reflect on the topic at hand. This is written in a standardised way as follows:
 - 'How to' articles can help to update your practice and ensure it remains evidence based. Apply this article to your practice. Reflect on and write a short account of:
 - How this article might improve your practice when [to be specified according to topic].
 - How you could use this information to educate nursing students or your colleagues on the appropriate technique and evidence base [to be specified according to topic].
- » **Preparation and equipment:** a description of the preparatory steps for the procedure and a list of the equipment required to perform it. If possible, reference citations should be avoided in this section.
- » **Procedure:** a clear step-by-step description of the procedure. The steps must be numbered and kept as concise as possible. If possible, reference citations should be avoided in this section.
- » **Evidence base:** a short discussion of the evidence base for the procedure. This section must be adequately referenced.
- » **References.**

We recommend that, before writing a 'How to' article, authors look at published examples to see how they are structured. For published examples go to rcni.com/nursing-standard/evidence-and-practice/how-to

Length

'How to' articles should contain between 2,000 and 2,500 words, including all the elements listed above and any boxes, tables and figures. Articles exceeding the maximum word count will be returned to authors for cutting before peer review.

Style and tone

When writing a 'How to' article, you should keep readers in mind, in particular their professional level and experience, and where appropriate the specialty in which they work. The article requires a consistent and user-friendly tone. The style should be professional but straightforward and does not need to be overly academic.

You should aim to make the article factual, clear, concise and evidence based. The information you provide must be accessible, accurate and unambiguous. You should seek to teach readers rather than suggest a particular course of action.

The use of jargon and abbreviations should be avoided. Acronyms should be written in full at first mention and, if used again, abbreviated thereafter. For example: Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) at first mention, NMC thereafter. Articles that refer to policy or legislation must state the country to which it applies.

Boxes, tables and figures

Boxes, tables and figures can be a useful way of conveying information while introducing variety:

- » Boxes may contain a simple bulleted list (for example, a list of symptoms) or text (for example, a case study).
- » Tables must present information in rows and columns.
- » Figures may include graphs, bar or column charts, pie charts, diagrams, illustrations and photographs.

Boxes, tables and figures must be numbered, captioned and cited in the article in their order of appearance. They should be easy to read and uncluttered. All symbols and abbreviations should be explained. Sources should be indicated and included in the references.

Tables and figures are usually redrawn by RCNi. The editorial team at RCNi may decide not to keep all tables and figures supplied. Regarding permission to reproduce existing materials, refer to the 'Permissions and ethics' section of this document. Images retrieved from the internet cannot be used.

Videos and animations

Readers who access RCNi's journals online seek engaging, highly visual and interactive content. Authors are therefore encouraged to consider using videos, animations and other multimedia elements to support and enhance their 'How to' article. You can supply the material or include links in the body text.

Guidelines on submitting audio clips and videos are available at rcni.com/write-us/author-guide-downloads

References

It is your responsibility to ensure that your 'How to' article is accurately and appropriately referenced using the current literature and primary sources. Unless you are citing seminal work, you must use references published within the past ten years. References to Wikipedia articles are not accepted.

The reference list must be placed at the end of the article under the subheading 'References'. Any formatting from reference management software, such as EndNote or Reference Manager, must be removed before submission.

Please adhere to the Harvard system of referencing, exemplified below.

Reference citations in the article

- » **One author:** Community-acquired pneumonia has high morbidity and mortality rates (Müller 2015).
- » **Two authors:** Blandin and Pepin (2017) argue that grief occurs in anticipation of multiple losses over time.
- » **More than two authors:** Stokes et al (2017) believe that trauma-informed care is an area where nurses' knowledge is limited.
- » **If two or more references are cited simultaneously, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent:** Differing management approaches can be a barrier to pain management (Neville and Roan 2014, Morley et al 2015).
- » **If there are two or more references to the same author, the order must also be chronological:** For adults with substance use disorder, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2007, 2011) guidelines support the use of brief interventions.

References in the reference list

References must be listed in alphabetical order. If there are two or more references to the same author, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent. Please include digital object identifiers (DOIs) if available.

Journals

- » **One author:** Müller F (2015) Oral hygiene reduces the mortality from aspiration pneumonia in frail elders. *Journal of Dental Research*. 94, 3 Suppl, 14S-16S. doi: 10.1177/0022034514552494
- » **Two authors:** Blandin K, Pepin R (2017) Dementia grief: a theoretical model of a unique grief experience. *Dementia*. 16, 1, 67-78. doi: 10.1177/1471301215581081
- » **Three authors:** Hunt PA, Greaves I, Owens WA (2006) Emergency thoracotomy in thoracic trauma: a review. *Injury*. 37, 1, 1-19. doi: 10.1016/j.injury.2005.02.014
- » **More than three authors:** Stokes Y, Jacob JD, Gifford W et al (2017) Exploring nurses' knowledge and experiences related to trauma-informed care. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*. 4. doi: 10.1177/2333393617734510

Books

Webster S, de Wreede R (2016) *Embryology at a Glance*. Second edition. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

Chapters in books

McErlean L (2017) The digestive system. In Peate I, Nair M (Eds) *Fundamentals of Anatomy and Physiology for Nursing and Healthcare Students*. Second edition. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 257-298.

Websites

Children's Liver Disease Foundation (2020) About Us. childliverdisease.org/about-us
(Last accessed: 11 January 2022.)

NICE guidelines

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2019) Delirium: Prevention, Diagnosis and Management. Clinical guideline No. 103. NICE, London.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unreferenced use of other people's work or ideas – published or unpublished – or of your own published work. Plagiarism includes copying or paraphrasing a sentence, paragraph, box, table or figure from another person's (or your own) work without appropriate referencing.

Your 'How to' article must be your own work and should be written in your own words. All mentions of other people's work must be attributed to the original author(s) and referenced in full. Direct quotes must be reproduced verbatim between single quotation marks.

All 'How to' articles submitted to RCNi are checked for plagiarism using automated software. This generates a 'similarity report' which shows any matches between text in your article and text in published content. The article may be rejected based on the similarity report.

Permissions and ethics

If you plan to use substantial sections of text or illustrations from a source protected by copyright, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder before submission. If permission has not been secured, we may not be able to use the material.

Figures previously published elsewhere may be used but will usually be protected by copyright, so you must seek permission from the publisher to reproduce them before submitting the article. Where permission has been granted this should be acknowledged in the text and evidence should be provided to RCNi. Please allow sufficient time to gain permission from the publisher, which can take up to 12 weeks.

All patient names should be changed to pseudonyms to protect patient confidentiality. If your article includes a case study based on a real patient, you must obtain their written consent to use their details in the context of the article. If you supply photographs with your article, you must obtain consent from the people in the photographs.

For further information on RCNi's ethical guidelines go to rcni.com/submit-an-article-ethics

Authorship

To be credited as an 'author', three minimum requirements must be met:

- » Making a substantial contribution to the work.
- » Being accountable for the work and its published form.
- » Having reviewed and approved the article before submission.

If people involved in an article do not meet these requirements, they should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' and their specific contribution to the article stated. See below under 'Acknowledgements'.

In a co-authored article, it is the authors' responsibility to decide jointly both the order of authors and whether a person credited as an author should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' instead. This must be decided before submitting the article. All authors must meet the minimum requirements stated above.

The corresponding author is responsible for notifying RCNi of changes to authorship.

Conflict of interest

Each author must declare any interest, financial or other, that could have inappropriately influenced their work. If there are no conflicts of interest to declare, a statement such as 'None declared' should be provided.

Acknowledgements

Short acknowledgements can be made to people, organisations or groups of people. The acknowledgement should specify how they have contributed to the module. If you wish to acknowledge a specific person or organisation, you must contact them and ask them to approve, in writing, the appropriateness of the acknowledgement, the spelling of names and the correctness of titles.

Submitting your module

Deadlines

Editorial deadlines are set to allow time for 'How to' modules to be peer reviewed and edited before their planned publication. Please keep to the deadlines agreed with the commissioning editor so that the production schedule and the quality of the content can both be maintained. If for any reason you are unable to meet the agreed deadline, please inform the commissioning editor as soon as possible.

Preparing your module

Articles must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents with double-spaced lines, single returns at the ends of paragraphs, margins of 1.5 inches and numbered pages. Please remember to keep a copy for your records.

Boxes and tables should be submitted as editable text, not as images embedded in Word documents. Boxes, tables and figures must be inserted in a separate section at the end of the module after the references. If a table or figure is very large, it can be supplied as a separate document. If a figure has been created in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), it should be supplied in its original format. Other figures need to be supplied in one of the following formats: EPS, PDF, TIFF or JPEG.

Please ensure that figures, including photographs, are emailed as attachments at the largest size available (the more megapixels the better). Please do not embed photographs in Word documents as this may reduce the size and quality of the file. Your smartphone or computer may give you the option to choose the file size to send. If so, always select 'large' or 'original'. If you are not given this option, the file will most likely be sent at the largest size available. Please do not make the file smaller than it is, since this often makes it unusable.

Online submission

Articles must be submitted through our online submission system, Editorial Manager. To access Editorial Manager, select your chosen journal at rcni.com/submitting-an-article

Your submission will be acknowledged by email and you will be able to track its progress online. Articles are assessed internally before being sent to external experts for peer review. You can expect to wait 12 weeks after the first acknowledgement before receiving a response. This will be either provisional acceptance without revision, a request for revision or a letter explaining that your article has been declined.

Copyright

If your article is provisionally accepted, you will be asked to complete an author form and sign a publisher's agreement, which assigns copyright of your article to RCNi. Articles will not be published without a signed publisher's agreement from each author.

Article proofs

Before publication, you will be asked to proofread an edited version of your article and answer any editorial queries raised. The in-depth editorial process at this stage may generate queries in addition to those generated by the peer-review process. You will then receive confidential Word proofs for final approval.

Publication

Articles are published online. The online article is the version of record and is fully citable. Once your article has been published online, you will receive a watermarked PDF for your personal use only. Your article may also be published in a print issue of the journal at the editor's discretion.

The publisher's agreement you have signed protects you from someone taking your work and using it unfairly. If someone wants to reprint or adapt your work or place it on a website, they will need to obtain permission from RCNi and credit you as the original author. RCNi does not usually allow articles published in its journals to appear on third-party websites. RCNi generally supports reprinting provided the proposed use is appropriate.

We also encourage you to upload the final provisionally accepted version of your article on your institution's online repository, but only six months or more after online publication.

For further information about how your article can be promoted, including open access publication, go to rcni.com/authorpolicies

Fee

An honorarium of £100 is payable following publication of a 'How to' module.

Contacts

For technical questions about submitting your article, contact Julia Mariappa (+442088723171, julia.mariappa@rcni.com) for Nursing Standard or Helen Hyland (+442088723138, helen.hyland@rcni.com) for RCNi's specialist journals.

For any other question, contact the editor of your chosen journal. To find their details, go to your chosen journal in the 'Explore our journals' section at rcni.com/write-us/explore-our-journals