Cochrane Style Guide

As well as using the Cochrane Style Guide, remember to think about the reader when writing your Cochrane protocol, review, or document. You can help the reader by:

(1) writing in the active (not the passive) voice, for example "we extracted data" (not "the data were extracted");

(2) using short sharp sentences (get to the point quickly);

(3) letting someone else read your review (they may give you tips on how to make it easier to read or tell you if it doesn't make sense);

(4) using plain English (you don't have to use complicated language to talk about science);

(5) writing protocols in the future tense ("we will search") and reviews in the past tense ("we searched"); and

(6) being consistent within complete documents (such as Cochrane reviews) in your choice of punctuation and spelling.

Can't find what you are looking for?
Use the 'Find' function with the electronic document. If you still can't find it, submit your query using the Feedback Form on the Cochrane Style Resource web site.

A

Abstracts

- Go to the Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook (Appendix 2a. Guide to the format of a Cochrane review).

Abbreviations

- Avoid using unless they are widely known and not using them could make reading tedious.

- Write each abbreviation out in full the first time one is used in the review or document and follow it immediately by the abbreviated version in brackets.

<div align="center">The relative risk (RR) value was …</div>

- If the review or document is long, it may be sensible to write each abbreviation out in full in each section (eg Background, Results), immediately followed by the abbreviated version in brackets.

- Avoid using abbreviations of chemical names in the body of the text.

<div align="center">Use 'the level of glycosylated haemoglobin' instead of 'the level of Hb A1'</div>

- Spell out 'versus' in the text instead of using 'vs'.

Standard abbreviations – write in full the first time used	
CI	confidence interval (remember to define, eg 95% or 99%)
OR	odds ratio
Peto OR	Peto odds ratio
SD	standard deviation
SE	standard error
RR	***relative risk****
RD	risk difference
ARR	absolute risk reduction
SMD	standardized mean difference
WMD	weighted mean difference
NNT	number needed to treat
NNH	number needed to harm

*Use 'relative risk' instead of the alternative 'risk ratio'.

Standard unit abbreviations – not necessary to spell these out in full Use for both singular and plural (eg 1 mg and 10 mg)	
litre	*do not abbreviate* because a small L ('l') resembles the digit one ('1')
mg	milligram
ml	millilitre
mm	millimetre
mmol	millimole
nl	nanolitre
h	hour
s	second
The µ (micro) sign is supported in RevMan (all versions) – go to Special Characters	
µg	microgram
µl	microlitre
µ m	micrometre
µmol	micromole

Acronyms

- Avoid using unless they are widely known and not using them could make reading tedious.

- Write each acronym out in full the first time one is used in the review or document and follow it immediately by the abbreviated version in brackets.

- If the review or document is long, it may be sensible to write each acronym out in full in each section (eg Background, Results), immediately followed by the abbreviated version in brackets.

- No full stops between or at the end of the letters unless it comes at the end of a sentence.

> acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) (*not* A.I.D.S. or AIDS.)

Ampersands (&)

- Only use if part of a recognized trade name.

> Proctor & Gamble

- Retain where it is used in the official journal title.

B

Bullet points: go to '**Lists: bulleted lists**'

C

Capital letters = go to '**Upper case letters**'

Commas

- You can use a comma before 'and' and 'or' in lists. Be consistent in your choice.

> - A comma before 'and' and 'or' is common in USA English.

> - No comma before 'and' or 'or' is common in UK English.

> I have read Cochrane reviews about malaria, tuberculosis, and vaccines. (with a comma)

> I have read Cochrane reviews about malaria, tuberculosis and vaccines. (no comma)

- Use commas before 'and', 'or', and 'but' in two -phrase sentences (when these words join the two main clauses).

> The reviews are written here, but they are available internationally.

> The reviews are sent here by post, or they are sent here electronically.

- Know the difference between a defining (no comma) and a commenting (comma needed) clause.

> - Tip: If you can substitute 'that' for 'which' and the sentence still reads well then it's probably a defining clause and doesn't need a comma.

> We produce Cochrane reviews, which are relevant to healthcare workers. (commenting)

> We produce Cochrane reviews that are relevant to healthcare workers. (defining)

- When a comma is used, both main clauses must have a subject:

The people (subject) stopped smoking, and they (subject) felt better for it.

The people stopped smoking and felt better for it.

Comments and criticisms

Contractions (Dr, Mrs, etc)

- These are abbreviations that include the first and the last letter of the singular word that has been shortened for example Mr, Dr, Mrs, Ms.

- Start with an upper case letter.

- No full stop after contractions.

Ms Crosby (*not* ms or Ms.)

Mr Belcher

Currency

- Use the following for writing different types of currency:

Correct: US$5

Incorrect: $5, 5$US

D

Dates

- Keep dates simple.

1 May

1 May 2000

May 2000

- Express decades as 1960s (not 1960's or '60s).

- Spell out century numbers unless it is cumbersome to do so.

fourteenth century

- Spell months out in full in order to avoid confusion between different regional date formats.

Correct: 7 November

Incorrect: 7/11 (UK = 7 November; USA = 11 July)

Decimal points

- Use full stops (USA periods) for decimal points. Do *not* use commas for decimal points (used widely in Europe).

15.51 (*not* 15,51)

E

eg

- 'eg' is an abbreviation for 'for example'. It comes from the Latin '*exempli gratia*'.

- Be consistent with your choice of punctuation (and use the same style for 'ie' and 'etc').

(e.g. men, women, children)

(eg men, women, children)

(eg, men, women, children)

- 'eg' should only be used for lists within the text, or in tables where 'for example' is inappropriate.

etc

- Be consistent with your choice of punctuation (and use the same style for 'ie' and 'etc').

(etc or etc.)

F

Font style: bold

Only available in RevMan 4.2.

Font style: italic

Only available in RevMan 4.2.

Font style: superscript

Only available in RevMan 4.2.

Font style: subscript

Only available in RevMan 4.2.

Font style: underline

- Only available in RevMan 4.2.

Full stop = period

- Spaces after

> - Cochrane reviews: when the publishers format Cochrane reviews, one space is allocated after each full stop. This means if you use two spaces, they will be reduced to one.

> - Other Cochrane Collaboration documents: use one space after the full stop.

G

Genera and species

- Genus name starts with an upper case letter while the species name does not.

Plasmodium falciparum

Plasmodium (genus) *falciparum* (species)

- Write in italics (only available in RevMan 4.2).

Gender

- Avoid 'he' or 'she' as a general pronoun.

- Make the nouns (and hence the pronouns) plural by using 'they', or if not possible, 'he or she'.

Gram-negative/Gram-positive bacteria

- Start with an upper case letter.

Correct: Gram-negative pseudomonads

Incorrect: gram-negative pseudomonads (incorrect)

H

Headings and subheadings

- Use upper case letters (with no additional punctuation such as colons) for all subheadings.

- Use the format described in '**Lists: ordered lists**' to distinguish different levels of headings and subheadings.

- There is no space between the **section headings** in the published version of Cochrane reviews (eg Background, Types of studies) and the text underneath them (even if you put a space in when you are writing the reviews).

- No spacing between **subheadings** and the text underneath.

Correct	Incorrect
MALARIA Malaria is endemic in some parts of the world.	MALARIA Malaria is endemic in some parts of the world.

Hyphens: go to **Prefixes** or **Terminology**

I

ie

- 'ie' is an abbreviation for 'that is to say'. It comes from the Latin '*id est*'.

- Be consistent with your choice of punctuation (and use the same style for 'ie' and 'etc').

(i.e. men, women, children)

(ie men, women, children)

(ie, men, women, children)

Indents

- Indents and tabs are not supported in RevMan.

- Do not attempt to arrange the layout of text using indents or tabs because the layout will change during the publication process.

J

K

L

Lists: bulleted lists

- These should follow the same punctuation as described in **Lists: list with each point on a separate line**.

Lists: continuous list within a paragraph

- Separate each point with a comma.

I decided to call Aika, Helen, Carolyn, Hasifa, Adele, and Christy.

(comma before 'and' is optional – go to '**Commas**')

- Separate each point with a semicolon if the sentence is complex (for example, several long points including commas).

The conference included topics such as learning how to prepare a protocol; search databases and trial registers; and draft a Methods section. (Semicolon before 'and' is optional – go to 'Commas'.)

Lists: list with each point on a separate line (single sentence)

- After the platform phrase, separate each line with a semicolon, exc ept the last line, which ends with a full stop. Each point should start with a lower case letter.

The programme aims to help you: (platform phrase)

(1) **l**earn about systematic reviews;

(2) **d**evelop your protocol;

(3) **l**earn how to develop your search strategy.

- It is optional to use 'and' or 'or' before the final point.

The programme aims to help you: (platform phrase)

(1) **l**earn about systematic reviews;

(2) **d**evelop your protocol; **and**

(3) **l**earn how to develop your search strategy.

Lists: list with each point on a separate line (not a sentence)

- No punctuation is needed.

        (1) Australia (country)

        (a) South Australia (state)

        (i) Kangaroo Valley (town)

        (ii) Bowral (town)

Lists: ordered lists

- Use the format (1) (a) (i) to distinguish different levels in a list.

M

Mathematical formulae

- Do not attempt to build a mathematical formula spaced over two or more lines in the text of the review. This is because the formatting of the text will change during the publication process.

$$\text{Correct: } 2 = 10/5 \qquad \text{Incorrect: } 2 = \frac{10}{5}$$

Measurement ranges

- Use 'from' and 'to' to describe a range (*not* a hyphen).

from three **to** nine participants (*not* from three **–** nine participants)

-12 **to** –4 (*not* –12 **–** -4)

The relative risk was 0.38 (95% confidence interval 0.30 **to** 0.49)

(weighted mean difference –11.11 hours; 95% confidence interval –20.04 **to** –2.18)

Money: go to **Currency**

N

Names: Cochrane Collaboration

- **T**he Cochrane Collaboration (*not* **t**he)

- **T**he Cochrane Library (*not* **t**he)
- **t**he Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (*not* **T**he)

- **t**he Cochrane Style Guide (*not* **T**he)
- Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook (not Reviewer**'s**)
- Collaborative Review Group (*not* **Cochrane** Review Group)

There is no policy on the correct use of the following options; there must only be consistency within a single document:

- Cochrane **R**eview or Cochrane **r**eview

- Cochrane **P**rotocol or Cochrane **p**rotocol

- Co-ordinating Editor (with hyphen)

- Co-reviewer (with hyphen)

- Review Group Co-ordinator (with hyphen)

- Cochrane Cent**re** (*not* Cent**er**)

Australasian Cochrane Centre	Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre
Brazilian Cochrane Centre	Italian Cochrane Centre
Canadian Cochrane Centre	Nordic Cochrane Centre
Dutch Cochrane Centre	South African Cochrane Centre
German Cochrane Centre	UK Cochrane Centre

- Cochrane Cent**er** (*not* Cent**re**)

Chinese Cochrane Center

US   Cochrane   Center

Names: Cochrane software

- RevMan Analys**es** (*not* RevMan Analys**is**) (only available in RevMan 4.2)

- Review Manager → Rev**M**an (*not* Rev**m**an) is an abbreviation (go to **Abbreviations**)

- RevMan 4.1 or RevMan 4.2 (*not* RevMan **version** 4.1 or RevMan **version** 4.2)

- Meta**V**iew (*not* Meta**v**iew)

- Mod**M**an (*not* Mod**m**an)

Names: country

- Use the following United Nations web site (list of countries) to check that you have spelt country names correctly and to find the official abbreviations for each country name:

> web version (http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm)

> pdf (http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/geoname.pdf)

- Avoid ambiguity.

> Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales)

> United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

> British Isles (United Kingdom and the Irish Republic)

> Holland (name of two provinces of the Netherlands – Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland)

- Watch for out of date names, particularly for newly independent countries.

- Use contemporary rather than modern names in historical works.

  - Use the name of the country as it was called at the time of the study, and not the current name.

- It is optional to put the current name in brackets.

> 157,259 people in 228 locations in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (now the Republic of Kazakhstan) took part in the study.

- Common mistakes:

Correct	Incorrect
Hong Kong	Hongkong
Cape Town	Capetown
Western Australia	West Australia
Colombia (country)	Columbia
British Columbia (province)	British Colombia
former Soviet Union	Former Soviet Union
former Yugoslavia	Former Yugoslavia

Names: pharmaceutical drugs

- Use non-proprietary (generic) names. These are not registered with a trademark.

- Non-proprietary names should start with a lower case letter, trade names start with an upper case letter.

> ciprofloxacin *not* Ciproxin ®

- If needed, put the trade name in brackets after the non-proprietary name.

> ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin ®)

- The WHO Model Formulary (MF) (http://www.who.int/medicines/organization/par/formulary.shtml)

 provides comprehensive information on all 325 medicines (using non-proprietary names) contained in the WHO Model List of Essential Drugs.

- The British National Formulary (BNF: http://www.bnf.org/) is an excellent resource for looking up the non-proprietary and trade names of pharmaceutical drugs.

Names: geographical

- Start with an upper case letter if part of the title of an area or a political division.

> South West Africa, Western Australia, the West

- No upper case letter if they are general descriptions.

> southern Scotland, the south of Scotland

Names: trade names

- Start with an upper case letter.

> Unilever

> Camoquin ®

Numbers

- See '*Exceptions'* below.

- In sentences, generally spell out numbers less than 10.

The review was sent to four referees.

- This also applies to ordered events.

ninth (correct) 9th (incorrect)

112th (correct)

Exceptions:

- In a sentence containing both numerals less than 10 and more than 10, it is acceptable to use all numbers.

from 2 to 12 years

from 5 to 25% of participants

There were between 9 and 15 people in the workshop.

- Use numerals for all numbers used in equations or statistics.

2/20

odds ratio 4.06 (95% confidence interval 0.90 to 1.02)

0.01 to 2.00

0.02

- If you start a sentence with a number, spell it out.

Three per cent of people

Twenty reviewers attended the workshop

Eight separate doses are described

- Use numerals for ages where appropriate.

- Always use numerals with a unit.

Correct: 8 mg

Incorrect: Eight mg

- Tables: use numerals for all numbers including those under 10 (go to **Tables**).

- Numbers between 1000 and 9999 should contain no punctuation. Numbers with five or more digits should include commas.

7677

10,000

- Be careful not to mix up: O (letter) and 0 (numeral).

- Distinguish between Roman and 'Arabic' numerals.

Roman: I (upper case letter)

Arabic: 1 (numeral)

- 'Billion' should be avoided or clarified:

UK = million million

USA = thousand million

O

P

Period: go to **full stop**

Prefixes

- Avoid building words by using prefixes and hyphens.

- Be aware that hyphens can change the meaning of a word.
unionised (with a union) and un-ionised (without ions)

- If prefixes end with a vowel and the word that follows begins with a vowel, use a hyphen.

- The following prefixes do not stand alone; they are either joined to the word they modify or are hyphenated: anti-, micro-, mini-, non-, sub-, un-.

Prefixes: anti-

- Use a hyphen with the following:

- letters (anti-HBs)

- names (anti-Bitis-Echis-Naja serum)

- words beginning with 'i' (anti-icteric)

- two word compounds used as adjectives (anti-gas gangrene serum)

Prefixes: co-

co-ordinate, co-operation, co-opt

Prefixes: inter-

- No hyphen when used as a prefix to a word beginning with 'r'.

interrelate

Prefixes: intra-

- Only use a hyphen if the following word starts with 'a'.

intra-abdominal, intra-acinar

Prefixes: meta-

- Only use a hyphen if the following word starts with a vowel.

meta-analysis, metastasis

Prefixes: non-

- Only one hyphen is necessary when 'non' qualifies more than one word.

non-insulin dependent, non-profit making

- No hyphen needed with Latin phrases.

materia non medica, non sequitur

Prefixes: peri-

peri-operative

Prefixes: post-

- *Spell as one word unless the other word begins with a 't'.*

postgraduate, post-treatment, postorbital

Prefixes: pre-

- *A hyphen is normally used in compounds whose second element begins with 'e' or 'i'.*

pre-empt, pre-embryo, pre-exist, pre-exposure,

pre-install, pre-industrial

- In others the hyphen is not necessary, but is freely used if the compound is one made for the occasion (might be better to rewrite), or if any peculiarity in its form might prevent its elements from being instantly recognized.

- Established combinations are generally spelt as one word except when the word begins with an 'e'.

No hyphen: prearranged, prenatal, preoccupy, preschool

With hyphen: pre-medication, pre-tax, pre-war, pre-eclampsia

Prefixes: re-

- No hyphen if used with a verb or noun, except when the original verb or noun begins with 'e'.

re-edit, re-educate, re-establish, re-enter, re-enlist

- Rephrase when there would be confusion with some other word.

re-cover (cover again) and recover (get better)

Prefixes: self

- All compound words with self are two words.

self limited

Prefixes: semi

- One word (no hyphen) unless other word begins with 'i'.

semi**-i**ndependent

sem**ic**olon

Prefixes: sub-

- Only use a hyphen if the following word starts with 'b'.

sub-basal, sub-breed

Prefixes: un-

- As a general rule spell any adjective, noun, verb, or adverb prefixed by un- as one word.

unnoticeable, unopened, unpaid, unpick

Prefixes (names): de, von, van

- Start with an upper case letter if at the beginning of a sentence.

Q

Quotation marks

- Use single quotation marks except when quoting within dialogue, and when quoting text from a written source.

In the study "12 participants experienced adverse effects" (Goodwin 1998)

The 'standard' theory is that …

R

References: in the text

- References are described in two ways in RevMan: *study identifiers* and *reference identifiers*.

- *Study identifiers* reference studies (trial reports).

- *Reference identifiers* reference sources listed in the 'Other references' section.

- The preferred Cochrane format is that the study identifier or reference identifier should be the last name of the first author and the year of publication. In RevMan this is limited to 20 characters.

Garner 2001

- Separate the study identifiers and/or reference identifiers with a semicolon.

Smith 2000; Robb 2001

- List several references first in order of year of publication and then in alphabetical order.

Bakri 1988a; Bakri 1988b; Preston 1988; Davis 2001; Slinn 2001

- There should be no 'and' before the final author.

Correct: Omari 1988; Preston 1988; Davis 2001; Slinn 2001

Incorrect: Omari 1988; Preston 1988; Davis 2001; and Slinn 2001

- Put the reference(s) in round brackets inside the full stop at the end of the sentence or within the closest punctuation.

Correct: The study was successful (Robeson 1990).

The study was successful (Griffin 1990); it confirmed previous findings (Howes 1995).

Incorrect: The study was successful **[**Robeson 1990].

References: in the reference lists

- Follow the RevMan format for writing references:

RevMan format for writing references (printer friendly pdf)

This is the section of the RevMan 4.1 User Guide that shows you the correct format for writing references. See the full Guide for the complete document.

- Do not put a full stop at the end of each line – RevMan puts them in for you.

Authors

- Only list the first six authors and then write 'et al'.

- If there are two or more articles from the same author from the same year, list them as:

Correct: Bushell 2000a, 2000b, 2000c

Incorrect (space between year and letter): Bushell 2000 a, 2000 b, 2000 c

- There should be no 'and' before the final author.

Correct: Smith H, Tavender E, Klaes D, Hinds P

Incorrect: Smith H, Tavender E, Klaes D, and Hinds P

- Be consistent with either using or not using a comma before 'et al'.

With a comma: Smith H, Tavender E, Klaes D, Hinds P, Remmington T, Sparkes V**,** et al

No comma: Smith H, Tavender E, Klaes D, Hinds P, Remmington T, Sparkes V et al

Article titles (including books, reports, etc)

- The first letter of the first word is in upper case. All other words start with a lower case letter unless they are proper names (trade names, country names, etc) or require an upper case letter.

Correct: Antibiotics for treating infection

Incorrect: Antibiotics For Treating Infection

Correct: The importance of Vitamin A

Incorrect: The importance of Vitamin a

Journal title

- Always write the full journal title as this will help make your references clear for the reader:

Journal of Infectious Diseases (*not* J Infect Dis)

- If you don't know the full journal title, the information is probably available from the following sources:

Index Medicus Journal Abbreviations (ftp://nlmpubs.nlm.nih.gov/online/journals/ljiweb.pdf)

This is a pdf file of the 3100+ journal titles (and their abbreviations) indexed in the National Library of Medicine's Index Medicus.

Web of Science Journal Title Abbreviations

(http://www.webofscience.com/help/A_abrvjt.html)

This is a list of thousands of journal titles (and their abbreviations) listed on the Web of Science.

Entrez Journals database (available through PubMed)

(http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=Journals)

Use this database to search for journal titles using the part of the journal title, MEDLINE abbreviation, NLM ID, ISO abbreviation, or ISSN.

Page numbers

- Write pages in the style of 324-8.

Correct	Incorrect
324-8	324-28
556-60	556-560
1093-8	1093-1098, 1093-98

- Supplements:

Correct	Incorrect
5 Suppl (1):324-8	5(1): S324-8
	5 Suppl (1): 324-8
The 'Suppl' is added after the 'volume' in RevMan	Do not add 'Suppl' in the 'issue' section or use an 'S' in front of the page numbers

Review Manager (RevMan): specific style notes

- Cochrane reviews are prepared using The Cochrane Collaboration's Review Manager software (RevMan).

- RevMan does not support tabs and indents.

- RevMan 4.1 does not support font formatting (such as bold, italics, underline, special font types or sizes) but RevMan 4.2 does support font formatting.

- The character set Western (ISO - 8859 – 1: http://www.bbsinc.com/iso8859.html) is supported in RevMan (both versions). If you include unsupported characters, the computer on which the review is read will determine what is displayed in place of them.

S

Search strategy: databases

- CENTRAL (*not* Central)

- MEDLINE (*not* Medline)

- EMBASE (*not* Embase)

- OLDMEDLINE (*not* Oldmedline)

- PsycLIT (*not* Psychlit)

- PsycINFO (*not* Psychinfo)

- CINAHL (*not* CIN**HAL** or Cinahl)

Search strategy: trials registers

- The Cochrane Controlled Trials Register (CENTRAL/CCTR) has been renamed. It is now called the **Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)**, and can also be referred to as CENTRAL. This change was effective in The Cochrane Library from issue 4, 2002.

- List the databases searched in the following order: 'Cochrane X Group trials register', Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), MEDLINE, EMBASE, other databases.

- Provide the date range of the search for each database.

     - For CENTRAL, this should be in the form '*The Cochrane Library* issue 4, 2002'.

     - For most other databases such as MEDLINE, it should be in the form 'MEDLINE (January 1966 to December 1998)'.

- When this section is published in The Cochrane Library the text '**See: Collaborative Review Group search strategy'** is inserted *automatically* below the heading. This links to the Group's module in The Cochrane Library where the search methods for the Group's trials register are described. There is no need to include a line of text referring to the review group's search strategy.

Spacing

- No spacing around: '/'.

<div align="center">

Correct: 10 g/litre

Incorrect: 10 g / litre

</div>

- One space on either side of: '='.

<div align="center">

Correct: p = 0.001

Incorrect: p=0.001

</div>

- Include a space between a number and the unit (go to '**Abbreviations**').

<div align="center">

Correct: 0.4 mg

Incorrect: 0.4mg

</div>

- Between paragraphs: there should be one blank line between paragraphs in a block of text.

Special characters: mathematical

- Do not use in a block of text:

Correct	Incorrect
plus	+
and	+
per	/
less than	<
greater than	>

- Where used to show data, use one space on either side of the character (eg = > < + -). However, this requires careful consideration as it may cause breaks in the middle of equations.

< 60 kg

- '%' can be used in a block of text when it is used with a numeral.

A total of 90% of the participants completed the study.

- Exceptions:

- Use a special character with numbers.

from 15 to 25% of participants

- Use 'per cent' instead of % when starting a sentence and when the number is written in full (ie not a numeral).

Three per cent of people

- Use '/' instead of 'per' where it is otherwise cumbersome.

10 mg/kg (*not* 10 mg per kg)

Special characters : text

- Do not replace words with special characters in the text.

Correct	Incorrect
and	& (except as part of a name, go to '**Ampersands**')
and	+

Special characters: how to enter in Review Manager (RevMan)

- The supported symbols are listed under the topic "Special characters supported in Cochrane reviews" in the help file.

- Either use the Windows' Character Map (available from the Start menu, if installed) to copy the symbol to the clipboard, and then paste it into RevMan (Ctrl + v) or follow these directions to copy a symbol from the Help file in RevMan.

→ Click on 'Help'
→ Click on 'Help Topics'
→ Type in 'Special characters supported in Cochrane reviews'
→ Select and copy symbol
→ Paste symbol in review text

- In **RevMan 4.2** you can also click the Insert Symbol button (alpha icon). This will display a window with all the supported symbols. Double click on a symbol to insert it. RevMan 4.2 supports several symbols not available in RevMan 4.1, eg Greek letters.

Spelling: '-ize' or '-ise'

*Note: -**ize** is generally associated with USA English; however, it is also used in UK English (for example, the Oxford English Dictionary uses –ize).*

*Note: -**ise** is generally associated with UK English*

- Both '-ize' and '-ise' are acceptable as long as you are consistent.

organize – organise

randomize – randomise

- If you choose '-ize', then be aware that some words are spelt with 'ise'. For example, in some words in which the stem is a noun, or words in which the '-ise' or '-ize' is not pronounced 'eyes', are spelt with 'ise'.

For example: precise

Spelling: UK English or USA English

- Both are acceptable as long as you are consistent.

Spelling: names

- World Health Organization (*not* organi**s**ation)
- Cente**rs** for Disease Control **and Prevention** (*not* Center or Cent**re**)

Statistical terms

- The following start with an upper case letter:

Peto odds ratio

Mantel-Haenszel

Subheadings: go to **'Headings'**

Synopsis

- Go to the Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook (Appendix 2a. Guide to the format of a Cochrane review).

T

Tab: go to **Indent**

Tables: footnotes

- If you need to use an abbreviation or acronym, use the following format for the footnotes:

    - list alphabetically

    - write the full name in lower case (unless it is an official title or name)

    - ideally, use a new line for each new abbreviation or acronym

       - where inappropriate, use semicolons to separate each abbreviation or acronym

    - do not use full stops at the end of each line

Footnotes

DSS: dengue shock syndrome

TB: tuberculosis

WHO: World Health Organization

- You can abbreviate 'number' using 'no.' (with a full stop) in tables.

Tables: in the text

- Do not attempt to construct a table in the text of the review using 'tabs', 'carriage returns', or multiple spaces. This is because the formatting of the text will change during the publication process.

- Use the 'Additional table' feature available in RevMan instead.

Tables: list (not numbered)

- Be consistent with your choice of format.

Participants	Inclusion criteria: Age; height; size; country Exclusion criteria: Apples; oranges; pears; bananas
Participants	Inclusion criteria: age; height; size; country Exclusion criteria: apples; oranges; pears; bananas
Participants	Inclusion criteria: age height size country Exclusion criteria: apples oranges pears

Tables: list (numbered)

- List (numbered): use the standard format (1) (a) (i) as described in '**Lists: ordered lists**'.

Tables: numbers

- Use numerals for all numbers, including those under 10.

Tables: text layout

- Start each block of text with an upper case letter.
- It is optional to finish each block of text with a full stop (be consistent with your choice).
- It is optional to insert a carriage return between different blocks of text (be consistent with your choice).

Outcomes	Outcomes
Death Cure	Death Cure Adverse events

Adverse events	

- Do not use carriage returns within a single block of text (eg in a single word if the word runs over two lines) because the text layout will change during the publication process.

Tense

- Write protocols in the future tense ("we will search") and reviews in the past tense ("we searched").

Terminology

drug resistance

- Multiple drug resistance (*not* multidrug resistance)

- Multiple drug resistant (*not* multidrug resistant)

fixed effect

- *not* fixed effect**s**

handsearching

- handsearching (*not* 'hand searching' or 'hand-searching')

We handsearched three journals.
The handsearching process.

health care or healthcare

- Use 'healthcare' as an adjective.

The healthcare centre

- Use 'health care' as a noun.

The health care was satisfactory.

the internet

- '**the** internet' (*not* 'internet', 'inter**-**net', or '**I**nternet')

low and middle income countries (developing countries)

- Use the term 'low and middle income countries' instead of 'developing countries'

"Low-income and middle-income economies are sometimes referred to as developing economies. The use of the term is convenient; it is not intended to imply that all economies in the group are experiencing similar development or that other economies have reached a preferred or final stage of development. Classification by income does not necessarily reflect development status." (World Bank; http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/class.htm; accessed 2 November 2001).

- Economies are divided according to 2000 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method:

High income: $9,266 or more

Upper middle income: $2996 to $9265

Lower middle income: $756 to $2995

Low income: $755 or less

- The World Bank web site (http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/class.htm) contains the classifications of all countries according to their economies.

participants, subjects, patients, people

- Use 'person' instead of 'subject' or 'patient', unless it changes the meaning of the text.

- Use 'participants' or 'people' instead of 'subjects' or 'patients', unless it changes the meaning of the text.

- If the trials are exclusively concerned with a single population such as children or women, you can use 'children' or 'women' instead of 'participants'.

per cent

- *not* percent

random effects

- *not* random effect

regimen

- Regime**n** is preferred (*not* regime)

subgroup

- *not* sub-group

web site

- *not* website

Titles for Cochrane reviews (Clarke 2002)

- Standardize titles by rarely using upper case letters, avoiding the use of abbreviations, and avoiding superfluous elements (eg 'effects of', 'comparison of', 'a systematic review of'). Base your title on the structure used for the vast majority of existing review titles in the **Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews** . At its most basic, this structure is:

[intervention] for [health problem]

Antibiotics for acute bronchitis

- No full stop at the end of the title.

- If you are investigating several interventions, use the word 'Interventions' (or more appropriate specific terms such as pharmacotherapy, psychological therapy, physical therapies, surgery) at the beginning of the title.

- If you are comparing two active interventions, use this structure:

[intervention A] versus [intervention B] for [health problem]

Immediate versus delayed treatment for cervical intraepithelial neoplasia

- If the type of people being studied or the location of the intervention is mentioned explicitly, use this structure:

[intervention] for [health problem] in [participant group/location]

Inhaled nitric oxide for respiratory failure in preterm infants

- If you are not specifying a particular 'health problem' (eg 'Home versus hospital birth'), or if the intervention intends to influence a variety of problems (eg 'Prophylactic synthetic surfactant in preterm infants'), use this structure:

[intervention] in OR for [participant group/location]

Restricted versus liberal water intake in preterm infants

- Sometimes you may need to specify that the intervention is for preventing, treating, or preventing and treating the health problem(s):

Pool fencing for preventing drowning in children

Amodiaquine for treating malaria

Vitamin C for preventing and treating the common cold

- If necessary, follow the word 'for' by 'preventing', 'treating', or 'preventing and treating'. This is better than using 'for the prevention of', etc.

- You should rarely mention specific outcomes in the title because the title should reflect all the outcomes included in the review. If you mention one, use a subtitle separated by a colon from the main title.

U

Upper case letters = capital letters
- Use lower case letters unless there is a compelling reason not to (such as the word being a proper noun).

V

Verbs: single or plural
- Treat each group noun such as 'government' or 'committee' as consistently singular or plural.

The government **has** decided to pass the law. (singular)

The government **have** decided to pass the law. (plural)

- 'None' may be followed by a plural verb.

None of you **claims** to know. (singular)

None of you **claim** to know. (plural)

- 'Neither' as an adjective or pronoun should be followed by a singular verb.

Neither report **is** relevant. (adjective)

Neither **has been found** to be appropriate. (pronoun)

- 'Either' as an adjective or pronoun should be followed by a singular verb.

Either report **is** relevant. (adjective)

Either **is** appropriate. (pronoun)

- The following are plural nouns and should be treated as such: 'data' (singular 'datum'); 'errata' (singular 'erratum'); 'media' (singular 'medium'); 'strata' (singular 'stratum'); and 'criteria' (singular 'criterion').

The data **are** …

W

X

Y

Z

_____

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Cochrane Style Guide

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