Writing for the Journal:
Tips for authors

New Zealand
College of Midwives
TE KĀRETI O NGA KAIWHAKAWHANAU KI AOTEAROA

Getting started: Choose a topic

- What topics are you enthusiastic about?

- Could you share the findings from your postgraduate study?

- Do you have specialist knowledge/expertise of a particular topic?

- What is the current literature around your chosen topic?

- Can you bring a new perspective to the topic?

- Is there a gap in the research that you have filled?

Writing with a co-author: Why and who?

Why?

- It can be challenging to explain your ideas clearly and make them flow easily for readers to follow.
- Ensuring your ideas are easily understood by your co-author is the first step.
- If the meaning is not clear to both authors, look at how it can be clarified.

Who?

- If studying, consider asking your supervisor or lecturer to co-author with you.
- Otherwise, we recommend writing with someone who:
    - has a good understanding of your chosen topic; and/or
    - has already had papers published in an academic journal

Writing with a co-author: How?

Who does what?

- The writing can be done primarily by one author, with the co-author/s contributing ideas and ensuring clarification.
- Alternatively, different authors can write different parts (but this creates challenges for the flow of ideas and a consistent writing style).

Working together

- Once it has been decided who is doing what, create a time line to keep everyone focused.
- Use track changes and comments to provide feedback to each other.
- Authors take collective responsibility for the paper.

Consider the structure

Become familiar with the appropriate structure for your paper:

(Click on type of paper for example)

- [Research paper]
- [Literature review]
- [Case study]
- [New Zealand audit]
- [Discussion paper]

The following slides outline specific structures for a research paper, a literature review and a case study.

Structuring a research paper

Sections:

- Abstract
- Introduction and rationale
- Aim/s
- Method/s
- Findings
- Discussion
- Strengths and limitations
- Conclusion

Structuring a literature review

Sections:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Rationale
- Method/s
  - search criteria
  - how/where searched
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Structuring a case study

Sections:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Discussion of case
- Discussion of issues
- Conclusion

The introduction

An introduction is necessary for all papers. It should:

- Grab the reader's attention
- Say what the topic is
- Say why it is important
- State the purpose or the research question
- Include a brief literature overview
- Indicate the gap your paper will address but without giving away the whole story

Method/s

The method/s should:

- Set out the why, what, when, where, how and who of your process.

- Outline how the data was analysed.

- Include a clear description and validation of any tools, instruments or apparatus used in the research.

- State any ethics processes undertaken.

Findings

The findings should:

- Provide details of the findings from your research or literature review.

- Use tables and figures if needed to help explain numbers:

  - In the text, explain what is important within the table/figure. Highlight patterns and trends in the data but don't just repeat the same information.

  - Tables/figures should be able to stand alone without detailed explanation.

- Use consistent terms in the text and tables/figures.

- Use themes and participants' stories to help explain qualitative data.

  - Explain what is important in the themes or participants' stories.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

- Provide your interpretation of the results – what is important from your study?

- Compare your findings to other research findings – what is the same and what is different?

- Recommend any further research that could expand current knowledge about your topic.

- Describe any practice implications, if the evidence is strong.

Conclusion

- Summarise the main points (keep it succinct).

Writing the first draft

- Familiarise yourself with the [Contributor Guidelines](#)
- Create an outline of your paper.
- Explain your topic, define terms, explain what is already known about it.
- Explain your rationale for why you think this topic is important to look at.
- Explain how you have looked at the issue – have you undertaken some research, a literature review, a case study or an academic argument? How have you gone about this?
- Explain what you found and why it is important.

Write, edit, write, edit and polish as you go

Getting to the finish line

- Revise and refine wording.
- Check that each paragraph is complete.
- Smooth any 'bumpy' bits so the text flows logically.
- Have your co-author/s and critical friends/colleagues read the paper in full and provide feedback.

- Read the paper out loud to check:
  - Does each sentence and paragraph make sense?
  - Is there unnecessary repetition?
  - Are the arguments or points clear?
  - Is there a logical flow to the paper?
  - Does it build to a comprehensive position?

Remember: Write, edit, write, edit and polish as you go

Final touches

- Choose a **title** that is specific and concise and contains searchable terms.

- Choose **keywords** that are searchable.

- Write the **abstract**. Remember, this is the part of your paper that will be most widely read:
    - Background: summarise the issue
    - Aim/s: summarise the rationale and aim/s
    - Method/s: summarise what you did and how
    - Findings: summarise your key findings
    - Conclusion: provide a concluding sentence

- Check and recheck that **citations and references** correlate and are accurate.

- Write the **key points**

Remember: Write, edit, write, edit and polish as you go

Submit your manuscript

- Check that your manuscript meets the requirements of the [Contributor Guidelines](#).

- Ensure your co-author/s are happy with the final version and with the order of authors.

- Complete the [Author Cover Sheet](#).

- Send your submission to Co-editor Lesley Dixon practice@nzcom.org.nz

- Your submission will be acknowledged and the editorial process begins.

The editorial process

- The Co-editors read your manuscript first to determine if it meets the Journal's objectives and philosophy.

- If it does, it is anonymised and critiqued by two academic reviewers.

- A Sub-editor is appointed to collate reviewer feedback and to work with you to get your content to a publishable level.

- Once accepted in principle for publication, your paper goes through a proofreading process, checking that the syntax, structure and clarity meets the Journal's style and standard.

- Be prepared that the entire process can take some time.

Dealing with feedback

- At first, the recommendations might seem overwhelming.

- A manuscript might even be rejected if the topic or the academic standard is not suitable for publication in the Journal.

- Try to appreciate all feedback as a positive critique. Take a few days' break before re-engaging with your work to make it more publishable.

- Common reasons a manuscript needs extensive revision or is rejected:
    - Inadequate literature review
    - Content is too basic or inaccurate
    - Content doesn't offer any new insights
    - Critical analysis is insufficient
    - References are outdated
    - Content is biased
    - The writing lacks clarity; arguments are not logical or not clearly explained

Helpful resources

See the [Journal webpages](#) for further information

See [Writing a journal article from your thesis or research project](#)
(Patterson & Gilkison, 2020)

References

Belcher, W. L. (2009). *Writing your journal article in 12 weeks*. Sage.

Fahey, K. (2008). Writing for publication: The basics. *Women & Birth, 21*(2), 86-91.

Fahey, K. (2008). Writing for publication: Argument and evidence. *Women & Birth, 21*(3), 113-117.

Huff, A. S. (2008). *Designing research for publication.* Sage.

Likis, F., & Aikins Murphy, P. (2014). *Writing for publication. Paper presented at the ICM 30th Triennial Congress.* Prague, Czech Republic.

Patterson, J., & Gilkison, A. (2020). Writing a journal article from your thesis or research project. *New Zealand College of Midwives Journal, 56*, 13-16.

Single, P. B. (2010). *Demystifying dissertation writing.* Stylus.

New Zealand
College of Midwives
TE KĀRETI O NGA KAIWHAKAWHANAU KI AOTEAROA