

New guidelines for writing abstracts will help authors summarise their research

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A new extension to the PRISMA guideline on reporting systemic reviews and meta-analyses (types of studies that analyse information from many studies) will help authors to give a more robust summary (abstract) of their study and is detailed by an international group of researchers in this week's *PLOS Medicine*.

These guidelines for abstracts of systemic reviews and meta-analyses are important, as the abstract is the most frequently read part of most papers and these types of studies are particularly important for influencing evidence-based research.

New guidelines are necessary as despite published [guidance](#) on writing the abstract in previous guidelines (the PRISMA Statement); evaluations show that reporting of systematic reviews in journal and conference abstracts is poor.

An international group of researchers (the PRISMA for Abstracts Group) developed the new [consensus](#)-based reporting guidelines to give authors a checklist and framework for summarising their systematic review into the essentials for an abstract that will meet the needs of many readers.

The authors say: "Abstracts should not replace full articles in informing decision making, but for time-pressed readers and those with limited access to full text reports, the abstract must stand alone in presenting a clear and truthful account of the research."

They continue: "The PRISMA for Abstracts checklist will guide authors in presenting an abstract that facilitates a quick assessment of review validity, an explicit summary of results, facilitates pre-publication or conference selection [peer review](#), and enables efficient perusal of electronic search results."

More information: Beller EM, Glasziou PP, Altman DG, Hopewell S, Bastian H, et al. (2013) PRISMA for Abstracts: Reporting Systematic Reviews in Journal and Conference Abstracts. PLoS Med 10(4): e1001419. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001419](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001419)

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