

WRITING PRACTICE ARTICLES FOR NURSING TIMES: AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Nursing Times publishes practice articles written by nurses on a wide range of topics; articles are also added to our online archive on nursingtimes.net – the most visited nursing website outside the US, making them freely available to nurses across the world. We welcome articles from both experienced and new authors. These guidelines offer advice on writing, describe the types of nursing practice articles you may choose to write and explain our submission and review process.

WRITING THE ARTICLE

Before writing, read a few issues of *Nursing Times* to become familiar with our style and the types of nursing practice articles we publish.

Writing style

Nursing Times aims to meet the information needs of busy nurses, most of whom work in clinical practice. We publish articles in clear, plain English, avoiding complex or overly academic language, and keeping jargon to a minimum. Articles should have a logical order, and should be broken up with headings, bullet-points, boxes, tables and figures as appropriate to help readers to follow your ideas.

Abbreviations should be kept to a minimum, and spelt out in full the first time they are used, with the abbreviation in brackets. Specialist terms should also be explained.

Article types

Series, In-depth and Practice review articles

These articles are normally commissioned, and discuss aspects of nursing practice or theory that are likely to be of interest to a wide range of nurses rather than specialist groups. They should be around 3,500 words long (excluding references) and should, where possible, include up to six Practice points, highlighting the main issues nurses should consider in their own practice, material for up to three boxes or tables, and/or ideas for one or two illustrated figures. Series usually consist of three articles. Please keep to a maximum of 20 references.

- If you wish to discuss the suitability of a series, In-depth or Practice review article idea, contact:
Eileen Shepherd: eileen.shepherd@emap.com;
Tel: 0115 923 1953

Changing practice

These articles report on practice developments or audits undertaken or led by nurses, and aim to share useful information and inspire nurses to undertake similar initiatives to improve their own services.

Changing practice articles should be around 2,000 words long excluding references, and should include:

- Up to six brief Background points setting the work in context, describing why it was undertaken and/or highlighting local or national policies or guidelines it was in response to;
- Up to six Practice points, highlighting the main

issues nurses should consider in their own practice – these can be specific to the type of initiative described or may be applicable more generally;

- One or two graphs, figures, tables or boxes picking out key information or results.

The article should explain how the initiative was undertaken, citing any evidence used to support the work. It is often helpful to discuss any problems encountered, which others could learn from. The article should also include the results of any audits or evaluations demonstrating outcomes of the initiative. Please keep to a maximum of 10 references.

Research reports

These articles should report on original research of interest to nurses. Our aim is to make research available in clear, plain English to nurses who are unlikely to read academic or specialist journals and therefore may not see research evidence and be able to use its findings to inform their practice. Research reports should be around 3,500 words long excluding references (please keep to a maximum of 25 references), and include the following sections:

- Background;
- Aim;
- Literature review;
- Method;
- Results;
- Discussion;
- Conclusion;
- Up to six Practice points, highlighting the main issues nurses should consider in their practice;
- Up to four boxes, figures or tables.

Research reviews

Literature reviews often gather evidence on a subject or aspect of care for the first time. This is of great interest and value to many nurses, yet is often only published in brief as part of a report on the study.

Research reviews are an opportunity for nurses who have undertaken research to publish their literature review at greater length than is possible in a research report. These articles should be around 3,500 words long excluding references, and should aim to present the evidence in a clear, logical format, broken into sections as appropriate to guide the reader through the article. They should include up to six Practice points, highlighting the main issues researchers or nurses should consider in their own practice.

Research reviews should aim to:

- Draw out key issues relevant to the subject;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of relevant literature;
- Identify gaps in the literature or problems to be solved;
- Draw together the main themes and arguments;
- Explain the relevance of the literature and its implications for nursing practice.

Research reviews and Research reports can be published as two-part series.

Research methods

These articles discuss aspects of research as they apply to nursing, and aim to help nurses to develop research knowledge and skills. They should be around 3,500 words long excluding references (please keep to a maximum of 20 references), and include up to four boxes, figures or tables and six recommendations or implications for researchers.

We are keen that Research methods articles should help inexperienced nurse researchers – especially those working in clinical practice. Our aim is to encourage these nurses to undertake research in order to both develop their own clinical knowledge and practice and add to the evidence base.

- If you wish to discuss the suitability of a Changing practice or Research article, contact:
Kathryn Godfrey: kathryn.godfrey@emap.com;
Tel: 020 7728 3706, or
Ann Shuttleworth: ann.shuttleworth@emap.com;
Tel: 020 7728 3705

Case studies

Case studies can be a valuable way of highlighting presentations or situations that nurses may not encounter in everyday practice, helping them to recognise or respond to them if they need to. They may describe situations that were particularly well handled, or where problems were solved creatively, but recognition that care could have been better can offer valuable learning opportunities.

Case studies should discuss unusual situations rather than routine presentations. They should be around 800 words long, and care should be taken to ensure patients cannot be identified. One or two key references can be included, but this is not crucial.

Guided learning

These articles aim to help nurses understand clinical skills or how to apply new guidance to their clinical practice, and support their professional development. They are published as two-part units in consecutive issues of the magazine. They should be 3,000–4,000 words long (excluding references, learning outcomes and activities) and split into two parts. For example, the first may discuss the condition or clinical issue and the second may discuss related nursing practice or clinical management. They should include material for a box or table for each half of the unit, and/or ideas for one or two illustrated figures. Please keep to a maximum of 20 references.

Guided learning units should include four clear learning outcomes (two relating to each part),

explaining what nurses can expect to know or be able to do after reading them (see box).

Writing learning outcomes

Learning outcomes should contain a verb that indicates what the learner is expected to be able to do after reading the article for example:

- Analyse;
- Construct;
- Describe;
- Distinguish between;
- Evaluate;
- Explain;
- Identify;
- List;
- Select;
- Solve;
- Understand;
- Write.

Keep outcomes simple, normally use only one verb per sentence and avoid jargon.

The article should be accompanied by four activities for nurses to undertake as part of their continuing professional development (two for each half). These are published on nursingtimes.net as **Portfolio Pages**, which nurses can work through and include in their professional portfolio. Activities should be linked to the learning outcomes and where possible related to clinical practice. Some examples are given in the boxes below.

Learning outcome: Identify the possible effects of diabetes on quality of life.

Activity: Explain how diabetes might affect the quality of life of the following patients and their families (think about both physical and psychosocial issues):

- A five-year-old child on insulin therapy who has just started school;
- An 18-year-old who has just left;
- A 75-year-old recently widowed patient whose family live some distance away.

Learning outcome: Explain the importance of concordance with treatment in leg ulcer healing.

Activity: Brenda, aged 75, has had a leg ulcer for six months, but only brought it to her GP's attention two weeks ago. She was referred to the leg ulcer clinic, where compression bandaging applied. She complains that the bandaging is too tight, and cannot see how it will help. Explain how you would help Brenda to make an informed choice about whether to continue with the compression bandaging regimen.

- If you wish to discuss the suitability of a Guided Learning article idea, contact:
Nerys Hairon: nerys.hairon@emap.com;
Tel: 020 7728 3704

REFERENCES AND DATA

References should be in Harvard style, with authors' surname and year of publication in the text e.g., (Jones, 2006). List references in alphabetical order at the end of the article in the following formats:

Article:

Small, G. (2006) A study of osteoporosis. *Nursing Times*; 102: 1, 79-84.

Book:

Jackson, C. (2006) *Shut Up and Listen: A brief guide to clinical communication skills*. Dundee: Dundee University Press.

Book (chapter):

Clarke, M. (2005) The autonomic nervous system. In: Hinchliff, S. et al (eds) *Physiology for Nursing Practice*. London: Balliere Tindall.

Websites:

Department of Health (2007) National Service Framework for Renal Services. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/NationalServiceFrameworks/Renal/DH_4102636

Note: Please restrict references to work published within the last eight years with the exception of seminal works and in literature reviews.

Reference checklist

References are a common source of error – please check the following:

- All references are cited in the text and included in the reference list;
- Years of publications cited in the text match those in the reference list;
- Article references include the first author, article title, journal, volume, issue and page numbers;
- Book references include the first author (and editor, where appropriate), chapter title where appropriate, full book title, town of publication and publisher;
- Website addresses give the full link directly to the document or web page cited, rather than just a website homepage.

Figures and tables

Figures/tables can be used to clarify information. Tables can be placed at the appropriate section of the text. Graphs and figures should be supplied separately either as Excel files or as PDFs, and must not be embedded in the Word document.

Photographs must be supplied as a high resolution JPEG (not PDF), and should be 320mm wide at 300dpi. If possible try to involve your medical illustration department. Images must not be embedded in a Word document.

SUBMITTING YOUR WORK

Articles should be submitted as a word-processed document without the use of reference management functions, coloured text or special formatting.

Include **three key words** and a **50–100-word abstract** (up to 150 words for Research reports,

divided into the main sections of the article). Graphs and charts can be sent as Excel files, but please also send the raw data so they can be accurately reproduced.

On the title page please state the **full name, qualifications, job titles and places of work** of all authors in the order you would like them to be published, with **full contact details** for the lead author and, if appropriate, a second.

Articles should be emailed to **nt@emap.com** stating 'Practice article' in the subject.

Conflict of interest

If you have any significant financial or personal interest in products, technology or methodology mentioned in your article (e.g., if research was funded by a commercial company), please make this clear on your manuscript.

The review process

You will receive an automatic email response confirming receipt of your email. If the subject matter and article level seem appropriate for *Nursing Times* it will be sent out for double-blind peer review. Reviewers report on articles from a range of perspectives, including whether they fit within *Nursing Times'* formats, accuracy, relevance and level, and are asked to make suggestions on how they could be developed.

You should receive a decision about your article within approximately eight weeks of submitting it. We may accept the article as submitted, but it is more likely that we will either accept providing that you undertake some minor developments or ask you to make more substantial developments on the basis of the reviewer's report. Some articles sent out for review are rejected.

We cannot give a publication date when your article is accepted, but we will usually contact you shortly before publication with queries that arise in the editing process, and can let you know at this stage. You will also be sent a copy of the issue in which your article is published.

You will receive your author's fee (stated on your acceptance letter) about eight weeks after publication. If payment is not to be made to the lead author, please inform us of this.

Copyright

We require all authors to grant Emap the exclusive right to publish accepted articles. You will be sent a copyright form if your article is accepted. Please complete and return this immediately, as your article cannot be published until we receive it.

If you reproduce copyright material from other sources, such as diagrams or assessment tools, you are responsible for obtaining permission to do so. Please obtain permission before submitting your article.