

AMA Manual of Style

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Study Design and Statistics

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

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Statistical concepts, such as the margin of error in a public opinion poll or the probability of rain or snow, appear in everyday conversation. But, just as one may understand how the heart functions and how blood circulates but not be able to perform a cardiac catheterization, an understanding of statistical concepts does not enable one to perform the work of a statistician. Although the concepts may be familiar, the tools of statistics may be misapplied and the results misinterpreted without a statistician's help. In medical research, the quality of the statistical analysis and clarity of presentation of statistical results are critical to a study's validity. Decisions about statistical analysis are best made at the time that the study is designed and generally should not be deferred until after the data have been collected. Even the most sophisticated statistical analysis cannot salvage a fundamentally flawed study. Regardless of the statistician's role, authors (who may include statisticians) are responsible for the appropriate design, analysis, and presentation of the study's results...

Mathematical Composition

Stephen J. Lurie

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Mathematical formulas and other expressions involving special symbols, character positions, and relationships may present difficulties in clarity in print and online publications. Careful markup (clarifying the symbols used and superior and inferior characters), avoidance of ambiguity through proper use of parentheses and brackets, and adherence to typographic conventions and capitalization rules in equations require special note (see also 8.5, Punctuation, Parentheses and Brackets, and 22.0, Typography).

Typography

Annette Flanagin

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Typography is broadly defined as the composed arrangement and appearance of text and other elements on a surface that involves elements of design. The editor and graphic designer often cooperate in the process of creating the typography and design for a book, monograph, or journal (in print or online), with the goal of achieving a balance of form and readability. According to typographer Edmund Arnold, good design and typography for English-language publications follow the linear flow of the Latin alphabet and support the act of reading. The English language is read from left to right and from top to bottom. According to Arnold, when a reader of such language begins to read a printed page, the eyes first fall naturally to the top left corner and then move across and down the page, first from left to right and then in a right-to-left sweep to the next line, until reaching the bottom right corner. Any design or typographic element that forces the reader to work against this natural flow (reading gravity) interrupts the reading rhythm and should be avoided...

Manuscript Editing and Proofreading

Stacy Christiansen

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Glossary of Publishing Terms

Jennifer Reiling

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This glossary is intended to define terms commonly encountered during editing and publishing as well as those editing and publishing as well as those industry terms that also have a more common vernacular meaning. The glossary is not all-inclusive. New terms and new usage of existing terms will emerge with time and advances in technology. Definitions for the terms herein were compiled from the ninth edition of this manual and the sources listed at the end of the chapter. Terms used in definitions that are defined elsewhere in this glossary are italic links.

Resources

Jennifer Reiling

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References

Cheryl Iverson

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Visual Presentation of Data

Stacy Christiansen

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Tables and figures demonstrate relationships among data and other types of information. A well-structured table is perhaps the most efficient way to convey a large amount of data in a scientific manuscript. As text, the same information may take considerably more space; if presented in a figure, key details and precise values may be less apparent. Text may be preferred if the information can be presented concisely (see Box). For qualitative information, text should be used if the relationships among data are simple and data are few, whereas a figure should be used if the relationships are complex. For quantitative information, a table should be used when the display of exact values is important, whereas a figure (eg, a line graph) should be used to demonstrate patterns or trends. Tables also are often preferable to graphics for small data sets and are preferred when data presentation requires many specific comparisons...

Ethical and Legal Considerations

Annette Flanagin

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This chapter is intended to provide guidance to authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers in the fields of biomedicine, health, and the life sciences. The discussion focuses on ethical and legal issues involved in publication. According to Lundberg, human behavior is regulated by 3 forces: morality, ethics, and law. If personal morality does not regulate acceptable and appropriate behavior, we can rely on ethics. Ethical behavior is determined by norms, principles, guidelines, and policies. This chapter cites examples of the determinants of ethical behavior as they relate to scientific publication. If ethics do not regulate behavior, we are forced to rely on public laws. Examples of cases involving scientific publication when laws have been invoked or enforced are also provided in this chapter. Those ethical and legal considerations and dilemmas most commonly encountered in scholarly scientific publication are the focus of this chapter. References to sources for additional guidance and information not discussed in this chapter are also provided within the text and at the end of each subsection...

Editorial Assessment and Processing

Richard M. Glass

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The principal goals of editing biomedical publications are to select, improve, and disseminate information that will advance the art and science of the discipline covered by the publication. For example, biomedical publications are a major source of information for the improvement of medical care. In addition to initial transmission to readers at the time of publication, information from journal articles is often carried by the public media. Published articles influence educators and opinion leaders, who transmit the information to many persons who do not read the original publications. Medical journal articles can also be subsequently accessed by clinicians and researchers seeking information about particular topics. Such searches are facilitated by online search engines (see 25.0, Resources) and provide the information essential to practicing evidence-based medicine,¹ in which patient-care decisions are informed by acquiring and assessing the relevant medical literature. These myriad uses of biomedical literature indicate the importance of the procedures to improve quality involved in editorial assessment and processing...