

# Pre-submission checklist: protocols

*Version 1.5 updated 2 June 2025*

## How to use this checklist

1. Use the [Cochrane Handbooks](https://training.cochrane.org/handbooks) and Cochrane’s [conduct standards for protocols](https://community.cochrane.org/mecir-manual/standards-conduct-new-cochrane-intervention-reviews-c1-c75/developing-protocol-review-c1-c23) for guidance on how to **plan** your protocol methods.
2. Use the [Cochrane review template](https://documentation.cochrane.org/display/RMHELP/Cochrane%2Breview%2Btemplate) for guidance on how to **describe** your protocol methods.
3. Use our [author guidelines](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines#Prepare%20manuscript) for instructions on how to prepare your manuscript.
4. Complete this checklist before you submit your draft to Cochrane Central Editorial Service. **Upload the checklist as a submission item with your manuscript. Requirements shown in red below are essential. Your manuscript may be rejected if these requirements are not met.**

# Research integrity

[ ]  All authors have seen and approved the version to be submitted (tick to confirm).

[ ]  Authors take full responsibility for the accuracy of the review, and understand that any [supplementary materials](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines/supplementary-materials) will not be copy edited or proofread (tick to confirm).

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| Requirement | Section of protocol or name of additional submission file where this is included  |
| Confirm all listed authors comply with [Cochrane’s Conflict of Interest Policy](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/editorial-policies/coi-policy). Some interests may prevent authors being listed as first or last author (see [section 5.6](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/coi-policy/coi-policy-cochrane-library#funding_and_interests)).Ahead of your submission deadline, all authors must [download a disclosure form](https://links.cochrane.org/declarationofinterest.docx), complete and share with Corresponding author before submission. The Corresponding author should summarise author interests in the ‘Declaration of Interest’ section in RevMan before submission.*Tip: ask co-authors to share information on any interests ahead of submission.*  |  |
| Confirm whether the protocol has been supported by a Cochrane group. If so, authors are asked to recognize this support in the byline by adding a [group attribution](https://documentation.cochrane.org/revman-kb/add-or-remove-authors-212995003.html#Addorremoveauthors-Attributions) in RevMan. Please use the following format for the attribution text:* supported by the Cochrane **[topic name]** Review Group
* supported by the Cochrane Evidence Synthesis Unit (CESU) **[region name]**
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| The order of authors must match in RevMan and Editorial Manager on submission. If not, this will be queried as an author byline change. Any changes to the byline after submission will require a signed [Changes in authorship form](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/editorial-policies#changesinauthorship) and the editorial process will be paused while we wait to receive this. |  |
| Describe each author’s contribution to protocol design and development in the Contributions of authors section. Show how each author meets Cochrane’s [criteria for authorship](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/editorial-policies#authorship). |  |
| Give the names of people who contributed to the protocol but do not meet the [criteria for authorship](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/editorial-policies#authorship), in the Acknowledgements section. This can include individual members of a Cochrane group whose support is recognized in the byline.Everyone named must give written permission to be acknowledged. Further details in our [Author guidelines](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines#Pre-submission%20checklist).*Tip:* [*Use our template email to contact contributors*](https://training.cochrane.org/sites/training.cochrane.org/files/public/uploads/EM_author_images/Acknowledgement%20%28permissions%29%20template.docx)*.* |  |
| If you used any AI tools when preparing your manuscript, give full details in accordance with [Cochrane policy on AI-generated content](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/editorial-policies#ai). |  |
| Confirm if any listed authors are involved in studies potentially eligible for inclusion. If so, you must specify in your methods (Selection of studies; Data extraction and management; Risk of bias assessment in included studies; Certainty of the evidence assessment), how you will comply with [section 5.6 of Cochrane’s Conflict of Interest Policy](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/coi-policy/coi-policy-cochrane-library#funding_and_interests).  |  |
| List all sources of funding and other support, in the Sources of support section. Include internal sources (for example, the home institution of any author) and external sources (for example, grant funding). |  |
| Cite all sources of information, particularly for facts and figures in the Background section. |  |
| Confirm your submission complies with [Cochrane’s plagiarism policy](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/editorial-policies#plagiarism).  |  |
| Obtain permission to reproduce any images from copyrighted works as Figures. Include this evidence with your submission.  |  |

# Consistency and completeness

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| Requirement | Section of protocol or name of additional submission file where this is included |
| All key section headings are completed. Methods sections are completed in detail, in accordance with the reporting guidance in the [Cochrane review template](https://documentation.cochrane.org/display/RMHELP/Cochrane%2Breview%2Btemplate) or other relevant reporting guidelines. If you are not writing an intervention review, check the [PRISMA website](http://prisma-statement.org/Extensions/) for any extension that might be relevant for your review.  |  |
| Remove all template text in the following sections and replace with your own words: Background, Objectives, Methods, Additional information. If text appears in the deactivated sections of the protocol (greyed out on the left-hand menu: Abstract, Plain language summary, Summary of findings, Results, Discussion, Authors' conclusions), it will not be published at protocol stage. Leave this text in place as it will help you to write your review.  |  |
| Remove all example tables in the Tables section.Use the Submission preview at the bottom of the left-hand menu to preview content to be published. Ensure no template text or tables remain in the sections of the protocol which will publish.  |  |
| Check that your Title matches your Objectives and is consistent with your Criteria for considering studies for this review (your PICO criteria). Your PICO criteria must be suitable to answer your review question. |  |
| Add search strategies for each database (and other sources, if applicable) to the Search strategies section. Include search strings, database names, access platforms, search fields and other limitations/settings.Your submission will be returned if it does not include at least one search strategy (Medline). |  |
| Read the protocol from beginning to end, to check it makes sense. |  |
| Describe all key terms (for example, names of interventions and outcomes) using the same language and in the same order, throughout the protocol. |  |
| Resolve all [Validation errors and warnings](https://documentation.cochrane.org/display/RMHELP/Validation%2Breport) on the RevMan dashboard. If you are unsure about whether you can ignore a warning, please contact support@cochrane.org.  |  |

# Style and formatting

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| Requirement | Section of protocol or name of additional submission file where this is included |
| Use the [future tense and active voice](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines/essential-style-guidelines#Tense%20and%20voice) for your protocol methods. |  |
| Explain all [acronyms and abbreviations](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines/essential-style-guidelines#Abbreviations%20and%20symbols). |  |
| Use [Cochrane referencing style](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines/essential-style-guidelines#References). You can [automatically update all your references to Cochrane style](https://documentation.cochrane.org/x/yoBeEg) in RevMan. |  |
| Choose either US or UK English and complete a [spellcheck in RevMan](https://documentation.cochrane.org/x/Bwf9C). |  |

# Supplementary materials

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| Requirement | Section of protocol or name of additional submission file where this is included |
| Follow the guidance on supplementary materials in our [Author guidelines](https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/author-guidelines#Supplementary%20materials). |  |
| Check for accuracy. Supplementary materials are not proofread by Cochrane. |  |
| Provide a clear and informative title for any additional (Other) supplementary materials, if relevant. |  |

# We welcome your feedback!

Please [complete a short survey](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HuLCtrdNM0WRY5jBRRwcqm54JVSN8vlOiSG73XxfqfZUM1NBTjJQSElLVzQ3UzFYTjdHMkI2Sk9TNi4u) (4 quick questions) to let us know what you think of this checklist.