Cochrane review specific

In this section:

Cochrane review: content, structure, and format

The new focused review format uses a slightly different structure from the previous review format. In the focused review format:

- the main article now includes only the main content of the review, with everything else moved to supplementary materials;
- in-text citations are now numbers in square brackets;
- some subheadings are different.

For guidance on the content, structure, and format of all types of Cochrane reviews see:

- *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions*
- *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Diagnostic Test Accuracy*
- PRISMA 2020 for systematic reviews (Reporting standards: changes to help create practical and sustainable Cochrane reviews)
- Focused review template
- RevMan Knowledge Base

Titles of Cochrane reviews

Titles for all types of Cochrane reviews should be in sentence case.

Avoid the use of abbreviations (except for those listed as common abbreviations that do not need to be defined, see Abbreviations and acronyms).

Avoid superfluous elements, such as 'effects of', 'comparison of', 'a systematic review of'. However,

- titles of review overviews should end, 'an overview of Cochrane reviews' or 'an overview of Cochrane systematic reviews' or 'an overview of systematic reviews;
- titles of qualitative evidence syntheses should end, 'a qualitative evidence synthesis'.

Titles can include italics (see section on Character formatting) but no other formatting.

Titles do not have a full-stop at the end.

Guidance on the structure of titles for Cochrane reviews of interventions is included in the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions*.

Author details

Authors manage their own name and contact information in the Cochrane Account system.

- **Title** (select from drop-down menu): Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, Prof, A/Prof
- **Given name** (first name)
- **Middle initials**: up to 2 initials. No punctuation
- **Family name**
- **Suffix** (e.g. Jr)
- **Email address** (lower case)

Other information can be added, such as department, organization.

RevMan retrieves some author information from the Cochrane Account system for review bylines and citations.

Citation

Byline	
• First name (required) • Up to 2 middle initials • Family name (required)	• Family name • Initial of first name plus first middle initial
For example, **Alicia JR Lawson**	For example, **Lawson AJ**

Author affiliations are added and managed separately for each review in RevMan (see RevMan Knowledge Base).

Abstracts

Guidance on the format and content of Cochrane review abstracts is available in the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions*.

Abstracts must be no more than 1000 words long, and it is highly desirable for abstracts to be less than 700 words.

Headings in the focused review format have been updated and are different from those in the previous review format (see focused review template).

Formatting options in the Abstract are limited to bold or italic text. There are no options to add bulleted or numbered lists, or RevMan-formatted headings. Hyperlinks should not be used in the Abstract. This is because Abstracts need to be publishable as standalone documents and this formatting may not be correctly reproduced outside the Cochrane Library. Use bold formatting for additional subheadings (e.g. in Main results).

Plain language summaries

Plain language summaries should use the template and follow the guidance that is provided in the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions Chapter III, Section 2*.
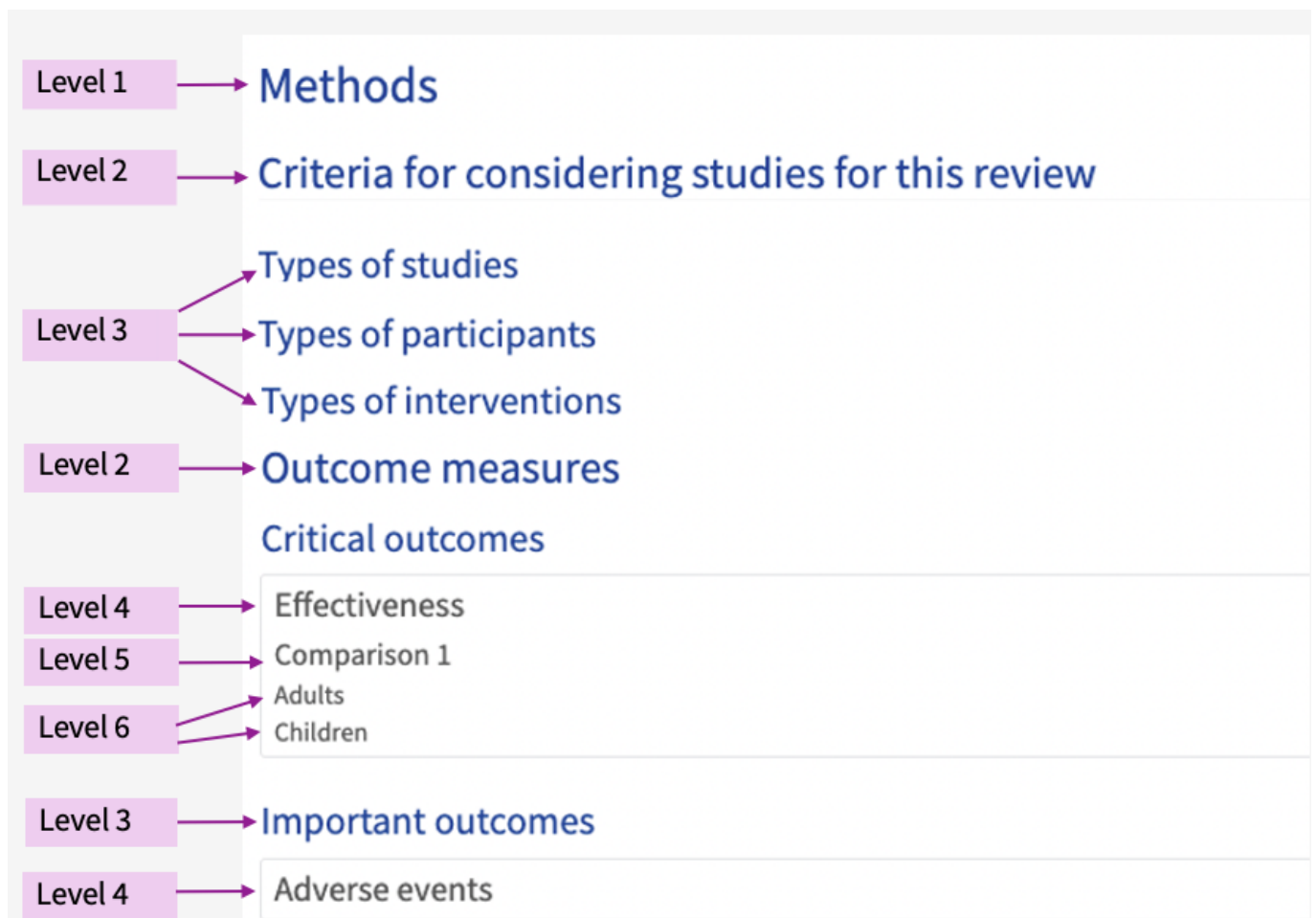
Headings

In this section: Headings in Cochrane review text | Headings in Cochrane review tables

Headings in Cochrane review text

- Cochrane reviews automatically include predefined headings (these are blue in RevMan). Some predefined headings cannot be removed or altered (e.g. 'Background').
- Some sections of the review have predefined subheadings that authors can deactivate manually, by leaving the text box directly below the heading empty. For example, under 'Outcome measures', the subheading 'Important outcomes' can be deactivated if required.
- Authors can insert author-defined headings if predefined headings are not appropriate (these are grey in RevMan).
- All author-defined headings must be formatted correctly using the drop-down menu in RevMan.
- Heading levels are numbered 1 (e.g. Methods) to 6 (author-defined heading).
- Author-defined headings should usually be the same level or lower than the preceding heading.
- All headings should use sentence case (i.e. only the first letter of the first word in upper case).
- RevMan inserts a space underneath a heading, so no need to insert a blank line - section text should start on the next line.
- Avoid using abbreviations in headings, although some abbreviations are acceptable if they have been defined previously (see Abbreviations).
- Don't add a full stop at the end of a heading.

The formats of the different heading levels are shown below.

Heading levels available in RevMan

Level 1 → **Methods**

Level 2 → **Criteria for considering studies for this review**

Level 3 → **Types of studies**

Level 3 → **Types of participants**

Level 3 → **Types of interventions**

Level 2 → **Outcome measures**

Critical outcomes

Level 4 → Effectiveness

Level 5 → Comparison 1

Level 6 → Adults

Level 6 → Children

Level 3 → **Important outcomes**

Level 4 → Adverse events

Some headings in the focused review format are different from those in the previous review format. More information is available here: intervention review subheadings.

Headings in Cochrane review tables

See Tables

Search methods

In this section: Citing databases and study registers | Search terms

Citing databases and study registers

The preferred format for the following databases is all upper-case letters: MEDLINE, CENTRAL, OLDMEDLINE, and CINAHL (not CIN**HA**L). A number of databases use a mixture of lower-case and upper-case letters, for example, Embase (not EMBASE), PsycLIT (not Psyc**h**LIT) and PsycINFO (not Psyc**h**INFO).

Some Cochrane Review Groups maintain a register of studies in their area of expertise. The name of the register may vary, but it will follow one of the following formats depending on the Cochrane Review Group's choice: [Cochrane Group name] Specialized Register; [Cochrane Group name] Specialised Register; or [Cochrane Group name] Trials Register.

The databases and trials registers and other resources that are searched for studies for a Cochrane review are listed in the 'Search methods for identification of studies' (in the Methods section). The databases and registers must be listed in the following order: [Cochrane Group name] Specialised Register (or Specialized Register or Trials Register), CENTRAL, MEDLINE, Embase, and any other databases.

In the Abstract, brief text may be used to describe the sources searched, e.g. 'We used CENTRAL, MEDLINE, xx other databases and xx trials registers, together with reference checking, citation searching and contact with study authors to identify studies that

are included in the review. The latest search date was x/xx.' (Add key limitations, if present).

In the Search Methods section, the date of the latest search (day month year) should be provided along with the issue or version number (as appropriate) of each database, e.g. CENTRAL (year, issue number). The date of inception of the database should be given where known. Database names should include the platform or provider name, and websites should include the full name and URL.

The date range (for databases) or search date (for study registers) of each search must be listed with each database; for example, CENTRAL (year, issue number), and for most other databases, such as MEDLINE, it should be in the form 'MEDLINE (year to day month year)'.

Example:

- Cochrane Wounds Specialized Register (searched 10 February 2023);
- Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL; 2023, Issue 1) in the Cochrane Library (searched 10 February 2023);
- MEDLINE Ovid (1946 to 10 February 2023);
- Embase Ovid (1974 to 9 February 2023);
- CINAHL EBSCO (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature; 1982 to 9 February 2023);
- PsycINFO Ovid (from 1806 to 10 February 2023);
- AMED Ovid (Allied and Complementary Medicine; 1985 to 10 February 2023);
- LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Health Science Information database; 1982 to 10 February 2023);
- ISRCTN registry (www.isrctn.com; searched 10 February 2023);
- US National Institutes of Health Ongoing Trials Register ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov; searched 10 February 2023);
- Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (www.anzctr.org.au; searched 10 February 2023);
- World Health Organization International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (apps.who.int/trialsearch; searched 10 February 2023);
- EU Clinical Trials Register (www.clinicaltrialsregister.eu; searched 10 February 2023).

Other formatting options for MEDLINE and Embase:

- MEDLINE Ovid (1946 to November week 3 2023)
- Embase Ovid (1974 to 2023 week 47)

Search terms

Search terms consist of text words (preferred spelling is two words, not 'textword') and indexing or controlled vocabulary terms. The preferred format for referring to the National Library of Medicine's controlled vocabulary used for indexing articles for MEDLINE (and PubMed) is MeSH (*not* MESH).

Focused review format: supplementary materials

The full line-by-line search strategies for each database (and other sources, if applicable) with search strings, database names, access platforms, search fields and other limitations/settings should be included in the Search strategy supplementary material (supplementary material 1).

Tables in Cochrane reviews

See [Tables](#).

Figures in Cochrane reviews

See [Figures](#).

Supplementary materials

Supplementary materials contain data and information to support or enhance the main article. They were designed to keep the body of the review 'focused' by moving content that would previously have been included in the review body or appendices outside the main review. Some supplementary materials are mandatory, prepared automatically by RevMan from data entered into various sections of the review by the authors. Others are created and uploaded by the authors to suit the needs of their review.

All supplementary materials must be [linked](#) to from the text using an internal link.

Note: supplementary materials are not copy edited, type set or proofread. Authors must make sure that all their supplementary materials comply with Cochrane editorial policies and follow [Cochrane style](#).

Linking from the text and numbering

Supplementary materials are not automatically renumbered by RevMan according to the order in which they are linked in the text. They are listed in the order below. The Search strategies supplementary material is always Supplementary material 1; after that, numbering may vary depending on which study types are in the review (for example, if there are no ongoing studies there will be no Characteristics of ongoing studies table, so the numbering will be adjusted).

- Search strategies
- Characteristics of studies tables (included, excluded, awaiting classification, ongoing), including risk of bias tables for RoB 1
- Risk of bias (RoB 2)
- Analyses
- Downloadable data package
- Other supplementary materials

To add a link to a supplementary material: click Insert internal link > Supplementary materials > select appropriate supplementary material > OK.

Types of supplementary materials

Supplementary material	Description	Style
Search strategies Supplementary material 1	Mandatory, automatically included by RevMan. Authors enter search strategies into RevMan: Default view > Search Strategies. • Include the search strategy for each database and other sources if used. • Include search strings, database names, access platforms, search fields and limitations/settings Link to Supplementary material 1 from the Electronic searches section of the review.	Headings should be in sentence case (first letter in upper case only). See [Search methods](#)
Characteristics of studies tables (included, excluded, awaiting classification, ongoing) Supplementary materials 2, 3, 4, 5	Mandatory for all study types in the review. Information about each study added by the authors at study level, using predefined headings. In Default view go to Studies > select study type > Add Study > Characteristics **RoB 1:** Characteristics of included studies tables include risk of bias table for RoB 1, if used. In Default view select	Ensure characteristics tables use Cochrane style. Styles (e.g. spelling, lists, abbreviations) should match the main text. However, write numbers 1-9 as numerals in these tables and use more concise, 'note' form, as long as the meaning is clear. Use abbreviations, and give definitions in footnotes. It is customary to use a dash (en-dash) when writing ranges in tables but it is acceptable to write 'to' as long as the style is consistent within and across tables. For

Risk of bias

Listed after Characteristics tables - numbering will vary depending on how many types of study are in the review.

Studies > Included > Edit study, then select Risk of bias from the choices at the top of the page.

RoB 2: authors add risk of bias judgements and support for judgements:

- manually in the analyses (Edit analysis > click on a row in results table > Action > add risk of bias); or
- from an Excel spreadsheet uploaded to RevMan (see RevMan Knowledge Base for template).

Authors can edit individual judgements in Analyses (it may be easier to edit in the Excel file prior to import).

RevMan automatically produces Risk of bias supplementary material from Analyses.

See Cochrane Methods and Chapter 8 of the Handbook.

(See Characteristics of included studies for RoB 1.)

example, 10 mg-20 mg or 10 mg to 20 mg. See Tables.

See Cochrane Style Essentials for advice on Characteristics tables.

See elsewhere in Cochrane Style Manual for all aspects of Cochrane style.

If quotations from the study are used to support risk of bias judgements, enclose them in quotation marks (double inverted commas).

Analyses

Listed after Risk of bias

Full analyses associated with the review, including results data, syntheses and forest plots.

RevMan automatically produces this supplementary material from the Analyses.

Ensure names of analyses are clear and include definitions of abbreviations (for example, "Analysis 1.1: Change from baseline in best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) at 9 to 12 weeks")

Make sure graph labels follow Cochrane style.

Check spelling is consistent with the review text (UK/US English).

See: Figures

Data package

Listed after Analyses

Full downloadable data package (zip file), including collected study data, risk of bias assessment, analyses and references.

RevMan automatically produces the data package.

Link to this supplementary material from the section Data code and other materials in RevMan.

See Data sharing editorial policy

Other supplementary materials

Optional, author-defined. Includes additional tables.

Note: figures, other than forest plots or funnel plots, cannot currently be included as supplementary materials.

Upload to RevMan. In Default view, click Other suppl. materials in the left-hand navigation pane > Add supplementary

Follow Cochrane style.

For additional tables see Tables

See elsewhere in Cochrane Style Manual for all aspects of Cochrane style.

material > add a title and copy/paste or
type supplementary material in the text box.

References and citations in supplementary materials

Avoid citing references in supplementary materials only. If references are cited in a supplementary material only, the reference should be contained in that supplementary material.

Cochrane review software

Software used for Cochrane reviews:

- Covidence
- GRADEpro GDT
- Review Manager (RevMan)

See also Names

Information on how to cite software is available in the References section.