Simple and accessible English

In this section: [General guidance](#) | [Words and expressions to avoid](#) | [Plain language summaries](#) | [Additional resources](#)

General guidance

Cochrane reviews should be written in clear, simple English so that they can be understood by the broad and international readership of Cochrane. Simplicity and clarity are vital to readability. Someone with a basic sense of the topic, who may not necessarily be an expert in the area, should find Cochrane reviews easy to read and understand. Some explanation of terms and concepts is likely to be helpful, and may be essential.

Complex or ambiguous expressions should be avoided or reformulated to promote readability (see examples below). Where a simple English phrase can be used, do not use non-English expressions; for example, use 'conversely', inversely', or 'the other way round', rather than 'vice versa'.

Words and expressions to avoid

This table lists selected examples of complex expressions to avoid, and acceptable reformulations

Avoid	Preferred
herein	in
the majority of	most
in the majority of instances	usually
ab initio	from the start
as per	according to
per e.g. Results not reported per intervention group	by e.g. Results not reported by intervention group
There has been a close to two-fold increase in the incidence of infection.	The number of infections nearly doubled.
not only do	also
in the vast majority of the trials	in most trials
There was a loss of participants, with the main reason being death of the patient.	There was a loss of participants mainly due to deaths.
There were eight studies that compared different types of antibiotics.	Eight studies compared different types of antibiotics.
The analysis showed there may be a reduction in...	There may be a reduction in...

Plain language summaries

A Cochrane [Plain language summary](#) is a standalone summary of a Cochrane review written in plain English. It briefly describes the key question and findings of the review. It is clearly set out, uses words and sentence structures that are easy to understand and avoids technical terms and jargon. A clear, simple summary written in plain language helps people to understand complex health evidence. Cochrane plain language summaries are freely available on [cochrane.org](#) and in the Cochrane Library in a range of languages. The aim is that anyone looking for information about the key points of a Cochrane review can read and understand them. See the [Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions](#) for guidance and the plain language summary template.

Additional resources

The following sections of the Style Manual provide further guidance on ways to promote simple and accessible English:

- [Active and passive voice](#)
- [Adjectives as nouns](#)
- [Tautology](#)
- [Verbs: single or plural](#)

In addition, many other resources provide examples of how to restructure sentences that may help authors promote plain English and improve readability. Examples include the [Plain English Campaign](#) or [Wikipedia's list of plain English words or phrases](#).