

Punctuation

General guidance on the use of punctuation

Symbol	Guidance	Example
Brackets/parentheses	<p>UK English: use round brackets throughout for nested brackets.</p> <p>US English: use round brackets followed by square brackets for nested brackets.</p>	<p>UK English: The standardized mean difference was -0.02 (95% confidence interval (CI) -0.13 to 0.08).</p> <p>US English: The standardized mean difference was -0.02 (95% confidence interval [CI] -0.13 to 0.08).</p>
	<p>Square brackets may be used in chemical formulae, mathematical formulae, edits to quotations, or to indicate an error in the original version of quotation.</p>	<p>pH = $-\log_{10} [H^+]$</p> <p>... as Jones said, "there are very few people who are resistant to [morphine]." (where morphine replaces 'this medication' to ensure contextual accuracy)</p> <p>Smith says "students tend to overlook there [sic] health".</p>
Colon	Follow a colon with a lower-case letter unless the following word has to start with an upper-case letter.	<p>Review topic: cancer</p> <p>Review topic: HIV/AIDS</p>
Comma	Use of a comma before 'and' and 'or' in lists is optional, but be consistent.	<p>I have read Cochrane Reviews about malaria, tuberculosis, and vaccines.</p> <p>I have read Cochrane Reviews about malaria, tuberculosis and vaccines.</p>
	Use commas before 'and', 'or', and 'but' in two-phrase sentences (when these words join the two main clauses).	<p>The reviews are written here, but they are available internationally.</p> <p>The reviews are sent here by post, or they are sent here electronically.</p>
Dash	There should be one space either side of a dash.	The reviews are sent here by post – or electronically – and then processed.
Full stop	<p>Use one space (not two) after the full stop.</p> <p>Note: when the publishers format Cochrane Reviews, one space is allocated after each full stop. This means if you use two spaces, they will be reduced to one.</p>	
Hyphen	Hyphens are used to link two or more word compounds used as adjectives, such as 'six-week interval' and 'four-dose regimen'. Be aware that hyphens can sometimes change the meaning of a word, such as 'unionized' (with a union) and 'un-ionized' (without ions).	There was a six-week interval between doses.
Period	See full stop	
Quotation marks	Use double quotation marks for quoting dialogue and when quoting text from a	In the study "12 participants experienced adverse effects" (Goodwin 1998).

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	written source. No other formatting is required for quotations (do not use italics).	
	Use single quotation marks in all other instances.	The 'standard' approach is to count only major events.