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## Citing studies and references

All references must be linked to the text or tables at least once, or there will be a validation error.

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## Entering and citing references in focused-format reviews

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In the focused review format, citations in the editable views in RevMan (Default, Full text) are presented differently from the citations in the published review and read-only views (accessible via the Preview option in RevMan). **The information below explains how to enter references in the editable views so that they appear correctly in the finished review.**

- All references must be linked to the text or tables at least once, or there will be a validation error.
- References cited in the main article should be included in the reference list for the main article.
- 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.

See RevMan Knowledge Base: [References and citations](#) for more information.

Information about [citing references in long-format reviews](#) is available on a separate page.

### To cite studies in focused-format reviews

Select reference type 'Studies' to insert a primary study reference as a study ID (for included, excluded, and ongoing studies, and studies awaiting classification).

Use this option when you want to show the name of the study (i.e. study ID), in, for example, the Results section.

- **In the editable Default or Full-text view**, the study ID will appear in the text, hyperlinked to the study. You will need to add round brackets manually, where appropriate. Examples are shown in the table below.
- **In the published review and read-only views**, the first time a study is cited it appears in plain text (no hyperlink), followed by its numerical reference and all its secondary references (numerical references), which are hyperlinked to the reference list. The study ID is not linked from the text at any point. Subsequent citations of primary studies appear in plain text, with no numerical references, and are not linked.

You may wish to rewrite sentences in which studies are cited for the first time, bearing in mind that the insertion of the numerical secondary references on publication could interrupt the flow of the text for the reader.

Subsequent citations of primary references to studies **will not** be followed by numerical references linked to the reference list, so you may wish to cite a study's numerical reference instead, which will be linked to the reference list (See [Study references](#) below). For included studies, you may wish to use only numerical (linked) references in the main text of the review and cite the study IDs for the first time in the [Overview of included studies and synthesis table](#). This means that the study IDs will appear alongside numerical, linked references to their primary and secondary references in the table only.

Studies	Correct	Incorrect
Study citations for primary study references sit inside round brackets, which need to be added manually by the authors.  Separate multiple citations with a semicolon. RevMan automatically adds semicolons if you add multiple citations at	(Gardner 2024; Robb 2021)	(Gardner 2024, Robb 2021) [Gardner 2024; Robb 2021]

the same time.		
List multiple citations in alphabetical order.  RevMan automatically arranges citations in alphabetical order if you add multiple citations at the same time.  You can use RevMan to reorder manually inserted citations.	<b>Alphabetical:</b> (Bakri 2020a; Bakri 2020b; Davis 2023; Slinn 2021)	<b>Chronological:</b> (Bakri 2020a; Bakri 2020b; Slinn 2021; Davis 2023)
No 'and' before the final citation	(Davis 2021; Omari 2018; Preston 2000; Ze 2019)	(Davis 2021; Omari 2018; Preston 2000; and Ze 2019)
Citations for primary studies can be used as part of a sentence or placed in round brackets <b>within the closest punctuation</b> .  Note: see below for single sentences containing multiple pieces of information	The study was successful (Robeson 2003).	The study was successful [Robeson 2003].
	The study was successful (Griffin 2008); it confirmed previous findings (Howes 2005).	The study (Griffin 2008) was successful; it confirmed previous findings (Howes 2005).
	Williams 2021 reports the full details.	(Williams 2021) reports the full details.
Sentences that include multiple pieces of information supported by a number of citations should be structured so that it is clear to which piece of information each citation refers.	Smith 2018 included adults only, while Jones 2019 included children only.  or:  One trial included adults only (Smith 2018), while another included children only (Jones 2019).	One trial (Smith 2018) included adults only, while another (Jones 2019) included children only.
Rephrase to avoid using 'et al.' in the text.	Royle and colleagues reported that...  The Royle study mentions...	Royle et al. reported that...

## To cite study references in focused-format reviews

Select reference type 'Study references' to insert a primary study numerical reference or secondary study references (all numerical) for included, excluded, and ongoing studies, or studies awaiting classification.

Use this option to cite a study, or one or more of its secondary references, as standalone, numerical references, for example:

- in the Background or Discussion sections;
- when you want to write – not link – the study name in a sentence and ensure it links to the reference list in the published review (via the numerical reference).

**In the editable Default or Full-text view**, citations for primary studies and secondary study references appear as numbers within square brackets, hyperlinked to the study.

RevMan automatically:

- adds square brackets;
- separates multiple citations with a comma if they are added at the same time;
- numbers the references in the order in which they are added to the review (**this order adjusts in the published and read-only versions**, see below).

Examples are shown in the table below.

**In the published review and read-only version** the numerical references appear in the text, within square brackets, hyperlinked to the reference list.

**Note:** the numbers for references differ between the editable view and the published and read-only view because RevMan reorders the references into the order in which they are cited in the review.

See RevMan Knowledge Base: [References and citations](#) for examples of differences between editable and read-only versions.

Study references	Correct	Incorrect
Place the citation at the end of a sentence or clause, <b>immediately before punctuation</b> .	Evidence indicates that around 80% of people experience postoperative pain [105].	Evidence [105] indicates that around 80% of people experience postoperative pain.
Study references shouldn't be cited as part of a sentence - the citation must be placed appropriately in the text.	We were able to extract additional data from two secondary references [21, 7].	We were able to extract additional data from [21] and [7], two secondary references.
Don't use round brackets. RevMan automatically adds square brackets.	We extracted data from two secondary records [104, 105].	We extracted data from two secondary records ([104, 105]).
Separate multiple citations with a comma. RevMan automatically adds commas for multiple citations added at the same time.	Acute asthma exacerbations can be dependent on seasonal variation [23, 24].	Acute asthma exacerbations can be dependent on seasonal variation [23; 24].
Don't use a hyphen to indicate non-cited references in a sequence. Cite each one individually.	Smith 2020 had four secondary references [13, 14, 15, 16].	Smith 2020 had four secondary references [13-16].
No need to put citations in numerical order. RevMan reorders them automatically in read-only views.	We included four new studies in this update [45, 99, 58, 43].	We included four new studies in this update [43, 45, 58, 99].

## To cite additional references in focused-format reviews

Use this option to cite journal articles, handbooks, guidelines, websites, software and other versions of the review.

**In the editable Default or Full-text view**, citations for additional references appear as numbers, within square brackets, hyperlinked to the references.

RevMan automatically:

- adds square brackets;
- separates multiple citations with a comma if they are added at the same time;
- numbers the references in the order in which they are added to the review.

Examples are shown in the table below.

**In the published review and read-only version** additional references appear in the text within square brackets and are hyperlinked to the reference list. **The numbers for references differ between the editable view and the published and read-only view because RevMan reorders the references into the order in which they are cited in the review.**

See RevMan Knowledge Base: [References and citations](#) for examples of differences between editable and read-only versions.

Additional references	Correct	Incorrect
Place the citation at the end of a sentence or clause, <b>immediately before punctuation</b>	Since publication of the original protocol in 2009 [36], some methods have been updated.	Since publication of the original protocol [36] in 2009, some methods have been updated.
Additional references shouldn't be cited as part of a sentence - the citation must	We created summary of findings tables with GRADEpro GDT software [17], and	We created summary of findings tables with [17], and followed the guidelines

be placed appropriately in the text.	followed the guidelines provided in the <i>Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions</i> [3].	provided in the [3].
Separate multiple citations with a comma. RevMan automatically adds commas for multiple citations added at the same time.  Don't use round brackets.  No need to put citations in numerical order.	Acute pain after a surgical procedure may influence recovery and quality of life [25, 93, 91, 92].	Acute pain after a surgical procedure may influence recovery and quality of life ([25; 91; 92; 93]).
Don't use a hyphen to indicate non-cited references in a sequence. Cite each one individually.	However, one downside to the use of intravitreal anti-VEGF agents for neovascular AMD is the substantial cost of medication for patients and healthcare systems worldwide [26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31].	However, one downside to the use of intravitreal anti-VEGF agents for neovascular AMD is the substantial cost of medication for patients and healthcare systems worldwide [26-31].

## Entering and citing references in long-format reviews

### To cite references in long-format reviews

This table provides guidance on inserting references in the text in long-format Cochrane reviews. The study and reference IDs must be linked to the reference list.

Guidance	Correct	
Separate multiple citations with a semicolon.	(Caster 2023; Robb 2024)	(Caster
List multiple citations in alphabetical order.  RevMan can reorder citations alphabetically via the Link function.	<b>Alphabetical:</b> (Bakri 2005a; Bakri 2005b; Davis 2003; Slinn 2011)	<b>Chron</b> Bakri 2 Slinn 2
No 'and' before the final citation	(Brown 2021; Omari 2015; Preston 2018;	(Brown Preston

	Wu 2011)	and Wu
<p>Citations can be used as part of a sentence or placed in round brackets within the closest punctuation.</p> <p>Note: see below for single sentences containing multiple pieces of information</p>	The study was successful (Robeson 1990).	The stu [Robes
	The study was successful (Griffin 1990); it confirmed previous findings (Howes 1995).	The stu succes confirm (Howes
	Williams 1991 reports the full details.	(Willian details.
<p>Sentences that include multiple pieces of information supported by a number of citations should be structured so that it is clear to which piece of information each citation refers.</p>	<p>Smith 1990 included children only, while Jones 1999 included adults only.</p> <p>or:</p> <p>One trial included children only (Smith 1990), while another included adults only (Jones 1999).</p>	<p>One tri children 1999) i</p>
<p>Rephrase to avoid using 'et al.' in the text.</p>	<p>Wade and colleagues wrote that...</p> <p>The Wade study mentions...</p>	<p>Wade e</p>