

Instructions for *AJOT* Structured Abstracts

(updated November 2023)

AJOT requires a structured abstract for all research articles. Below are guidelines for what to include in an abstract for research that reports original data (including qualitative research), meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and meta-syntheses.

In addition to these requirements, authors should note the following:

- Abstracts should contain only information that is also provided in the main text of the manuscript while not extensively repeating the findings.
- In adhering to the word count, authors may write parts of the abstract as phrases rather than as complete sentences.
- *AJOT* editorial staff may combine abstract headings, as appropriate.

Each abstract should conclude with a Plain-Language Summary of what the research adds to occupational therapy or how it could benefit occupational therapy clients. The Plain-Language Summary is **not** included in the abstract word count.

Original Data (Including Qualitative Research)

Abstracts should have no more than 250 words and should use the headings listed below, in the order indicated.

Importance: Provide one or two sentences explaining the importance of the study question.

Objective: Provide the objective or study question (e.g., “To assess the validity of . . .” or “To assess the effectiveness of . . .”). For studies with multiple objectives, state the main objective and key secondary objectives. State any a priori hypotheses tested.

Design: State the study type (e.g., randomized clinical trial, cohort, interview or focus group, etc.) and the basic design of the study. Indicate the study length and follow-up intervals as well as any relevant blinding of researchers.

For *qualitative research*, include the sampling and data collection method, the analytical approach taken and its justification in light of the research question, and how the reliability and validity of the data were determined.

Setting: Describe the study setting (e.g., individual clinic, community, health care institution).

Participants: Summarize the clinical issues, inclusion criteria, and sociodemographic features of the study participants. Indicate the number of eligible participants and the selection process (e.g., random, snowball, volunteer, etc.).

Intervention: If the study involves an intervention, describe its key components, including the method and duration.

Outcomes and Measures: State the study outcome measures planned before data collection began; if the manuscript does not report the planned outcomes, state why. Indicate whether the hypotheses tested were formulated during or after data collection. Be sure to explain any outcomes or measures that would not be familiar to a general occupational therapy readership.

Results: State the basic demographic information (e.g., sex, age) and final number of study participants. Summarize the main outcomes of the study; if space permits, present key quantitative results (with confidence intervals or other qualifiers, if applicable). In reporting statistics, refer to our [Guidelines for Contributors to AJOT](#).

Conclusions and Relevance: State conclusions that are directly supported by the results, whether the findings support or refute the hypotheses tested. Indicate the implications for clinical practice or health policy (to be elaborated upon in the manuscript's "Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice" section). Indicate whether additional study is required before the results can be applied in clinical settings.

For *qualitative research*, provide sufficient information to support the interpretation of qualitative data. Give equal emphasis to positive and negative findings of equal scientific merit, or deviant cases that do not fit the central interpretation of qualitative findings.

Plain-Language Summary (not included in abstract word count): A plain-language summary (PLS) describes the significance of research findings and evidence to a broad audience in clear, easy-to-understand, jargon-free, and nontechnical language. The PLS should be no more than 150 words. It should be placed at the end of the abstract and is not included in the abstract word count. Keep the following in mind as you write the PLS:

- Use easy-to-understand, clear, jargon-free, and nontechnical language. If you need to use a technical term or abbreviation, explain or define it the first time you use it.
- Use short and noncomplex sentences and phrases.
- Answer the following questions: Why was the study done? What were the findings? What do the results mean and how could they benefit occupational therapy clients? What is the overall influence on and contribution to occupational therapy research, practice, or education?

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

Abstracts of systematic reviews and meta-analyses should have no more than 250 words and should use the headings listed below, in the order indicated. The text of the manuscript should follow our [Guidelines for Systematic Reviews](#). *Note:* If a systematic review includes a meta-analysis, provide an abstract combining the requirements for both.

Importance: Provide one or two sentences explaining the importance of the study question.

Objective: State the primary objective of the systematic review or meta-analysis. Indicate whether the systematic review or the meta-analysis emphasizes specific factors (e.g., a type of therapy or population), and include information about the specific population, intervention, and outcomes under study.

Data Sources: Summarize data sources, including databases and years searched; elaborate on these sources in the manuscript as described in our [Guidelines for Systematic Reviews](#). Evidence reviews should include the search strategies and other sources of material, such as subsequent reference searches of retrieved articles.

Study Selection and Data Collection: State the guidelines used for abstracting data and assessing data quality and validity (for *AJOT*, this is usually PRISMA) as well as the method by which the guidelines were applied. Describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Findings: Summarize the number of articles included and types of studies for each level of evidence; if possible, indicate the number of participants represented by the studies in the meta-analysis or systematic review. Summarize the major findings, focusing on the evidence of the highest quality. Briefly highlight the sources of variation among studies. Provide quantitative data, if possible. In reporting statistics, refer to our [Guidelines for Contributors to AJOT](#).

Meta-analyses should state the major outcomes that were pooled and include odds ratios or effect sizes and, if possible, sensitivity analyses. Include statistics such as sensitivity, specificity, likelihood ratios, receiver operating characteristic curves, and predictive values.

Conclusions and Relevance: Clearly answer the research question(s), and suggest the clinical applicability of the findings. Limit interpretation to the scope of the review; conclusions should be based only on results described in the abstract's Findings section.

Plain-Language Summary (not included in abstract word count): A plain-language summary (PLS) describes the significance of research findings and evidence to a broad audience in clear, easy-to-understand, jargon-free, and nontechnical language. The PLS should be no more than 150 words. It should be placed at the end of the abstract and is not included in the abstract word count. Keep the following in mind as you write the PLS:

- Use easy-to-understand, clear, jargon-free, and nontechnical language. If you need to use a technical term or abbreviation, explain or define it the first time you use it.
- Use short and noncomplex sentences and phrases.
- Answer the following questions: Why was the study done? What were the findings? What do the results mean and how could they benefit occupational therapy clients? What is the overall influence on and contribution to occupational therapy research, practice, or education?

Meta-Syntheses

Meta-syntheses should include a structured abstract of no more than 250 words using the headings listed below, in the order indicated.

Importance: Include one or two sentences describing the clinical question or issue and its importance in clinical practice or public health.

Objective: State the precise primary objective of the review. Include information about the specific population, situation, intervention, exposure, and tests or outcomes that are being reviewed.

Evidence Review: Describe the sources used, including the search strategies, years searched, and other sources of material, such as subsequent reference searches of retrieved articles. Methods used for inclusion of identified articles and quality assessment should be explained.

Findings: Briefly summarize the number of articles included, types of studies, and participants represented by these studies. Summarize the major findings of the review in an objective, balanced fashion, emphasizing the evidence of the highest quality. Note any limitations of the data and findings.

Conclusions and Relevance: Clearly answer the questions posed, using the available evidence, and emphasize how clinicians should apply current knowledge. Note any further research that is needed. Conclusions should be based only on results described in the Findings section.

Plain-Language Summary (not included in abstract word count): A plain-language summary (PLS) describes the significance of research findings and evidence to a broad audience in clear, easy-to-understand, jargon-free, and nontechnical language. The PLS should be no more than 150 words. It should be placed at the end of the abstract and is not included in the abstract word count. Keep the following in mind as you write the PLS:

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- Use short and noncomplex sentences and phrases.
- Answer the following questions: Why was the study done? What were the findings? What do the results mean and how could they benefit occupational therapy clients? What is the overall influence on and contribution to occupational therapy research, practice, or education?

Acknowledgment

AJOT's guidelines for structured abstracts are derived from the approach used in *JAMA*.

Reference

American Medical Association. (2018). *JAMA instructions for authors*.

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/pages/instructions-for-authors>