

# Template for writing a Cochrane Plain language summary

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## The template:

- provides the structure you should use for your Plain language summary;
- gives brief guidance on what each section should cover;
- suggests text for you to use;

For more detailed guidance and examples, follow the links in the template.

See also [About Cochrane Plain language summaries](#), [How to approach writing a Plain language summary](#) and [General advice on writing in plain language](#).

## Template headings

- Plain language summary title
- Key messages
- *Tailored heading: for example, What is epilepsy?*
- *Optional tailored heading: for example, How is epilepsy treated?*
- What did we want to find out?
- What did we do?
- What did we find?
- *Optional heading: Main results*
- What are the limitations of the evidence?
- How up to date is this evidence?

## How to use this template

- Write your text in the boxes on the left-hand side.
- Write new headings over the blue headings; retain the black headings
- The text in the right-hand boxes provides brief guidance. Follow the links in the template to guidance on specific sections.
- When you've written your text, copy and paste each section, with the heading, into Review Manager.
- You may need to adjust the line spacing in Review Manager and [format bullet points](#);  
or
- write your text directly into Review Manager using the headings and following the guidance below
- Check your work against the guidance and ask someone else to read it.

**Word limit:** 400 to 850 words, including the title

<h3>Write your PLS title here</h3>	<p>Write the main review question in plain language.</p> <p>Examples of text you could use:</p> <p>What are the benefits and risks of intervention for [treating] condition?</p> <p>Intervention a or intervention b: which works better to treat condition?</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.1 for guidance on summary titles</a></p>
<h3>Key messages</h3> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Add at least 2 and no more than 3 <b>bullet points</b> that summarize the main findings and implications of the review.</p> <p><b>Explain any technical terms that appear in the key messages.</b> The key messages will likely be read first and they might be the only part of the summary that some people read. Do not use any terms that your readers might not understand. Even if you explain those technical terms later in the summary, you should also explain them in the key messages.</p> <p>Do not make any recommendations about whether or not a treatment should be used.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.2 for guidance on writing key messages</a></p>
<h3>Write your tailored heading here for introduction to the review topic</h3> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Replace the heading for this section with heading(s) tailored to the review. For example:</p> <p><b>What is epilepsy?</b></p> <p>Briefly explain what the review is about and why it is important.</p> <p>Make sure that you:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>avoid acronyms and abbreviations</b> (or introduce and explain them if you need to use them); and</li> <li>• <b>define any technical terms</b> you use.</li> </ul> <p>Example of text you could use:</p> <p><b>What is condition?</b></p> <p>Condition is a [common/rare] condition that affects relevant part of the body. It is caused by brief explanation of cause. People with condition [can] experience symptoms.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.3 for guidance on explaining the review topic</a></p>
<p><b>Write your optional tailored heading here</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>If you need another section to explain something else, use this box, otherwise ignore it.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p><b>How is condition treated?</b></p> <p>Treatments for condition include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intervention a</li> <li>• intervention b</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">See section 2.3 for guidance on explaining the review topic</a></p>
<p><b>What did we want to find out?</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Briefly explain the review aims.</p> <p>Example of text you could use:</p> <p>We wanted to find out if intervention a was better than intervention b to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outcome 1</li> <li>• outcome 2</li> </ul> <p>We also wanted to find out if intervention a was associated with any unwanted effects.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.3 for guidance on describing the review aims</a></p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Briefly mention the review methods (for example, that the review involved searching for studies with specific characteristics, summarizing their results and evaluating the evidence).</p> <p>Example of text you could use:</p> <p>We searched for studies that looked at/investigated/examined intervention a compared with intervention b in population.</p>

	<p>We compared and summarized the results of the studies and rated our confidence in the evidence, based on factors such as study methods and sizes.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.4 for guidance on reporting review methods</a></p>
<p><b>What did we find?</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Write about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the main characteristics of the studies that were included in the review.</li> </ul> <p>Example of text you could use to report study characteristics:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We found number of studies that involved number of people with condition and lasted study duration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the main results of the review (those presented in the summary of findings table(s) and the Abstract).</li> </ul> <p>Reminder: <b>do not:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>report summary statistics and confidence intervals</li> <li>use 'low-/moderate-/high-certainty evidence'.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">See section 2.5 for guidance on reporting results</a></p>
<p><b>Main results</b> (optional heading)</p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Add another heading to present your results if you need to.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.5 for guidance on reporting results</a></p>
<p><b>What are the limitations of the evidence?</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>Mention the main limitations of the evidence.</p> <p>Reminder: <b>do not use technical phrases like 'risk of bias' or 'low-certainty evidence'.</b> See full guidance for ways to express the limitations of the evidence in plain language.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.6 for guidance on expressing limitations of the evidence</a></p>
<p><b>How up to date is this evidence?</b></p> <p>Write your text here</p>	<p>State the month and year when studies were searched for.</p> <p>Example of text you could use:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">[This review updates our previous review.] The evidence is up to date to month and year of search.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 2.7 for guidance on reporting search dates</a></p>