The SRQR reporting guideline writing guide

For writing impactful qualitative health research articles that can be understood and used by a wide audience.

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| Note |
| If you have not used a writing guide before, read about our suggested [writing process](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/about/writing-using-reporting-guidelines.html).  This guide is not a template. Don’t expect to fill it in and end up with a finished article. Instead, think of it as an exercise book.   1. Collate information and make notes in this guide; 2. Delete the prompts and headings, reorganise your notes into a narrative structure, moving content to tables, figures, or appendices when appropriate, thereby creating a writing outline. 3. Draft, revise, and edit your text in a separate file, referring to your outline throughout.   Before you begin, double check that SRQR is the [most applicable reporting guideline](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/index.html?#applicability) for your work. Other reporting guidelines have their own writing guide.  The [UK EQUATOR Centre training](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/training.html) helps researchers develop writing skills and to use reporting guidelines (like this one) to write research articles and applications that are complete, concise, and compelling. It covers many of the items of the SRQR reporting guideline, including how to prepare effective abstracts, titles, introduction and discussion sections, as well as how to use writing guides to create writing outlines, how to turn outlines into drafts, and drafts into polished text. |

# Introduction

## [Purpose or research question](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/purpose.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| What was the purpose of your study? Authors often frame this as one or more questions or statements, often asking “how” or “why”.  Consider the acronym [SPIDER](https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732312452938):   * Sample (who did you speak to?), * Phenomena of Interest (the topic of the research, e.g., the behaviour or event you are interested in) * Design (your theoretical framework and methods) * Evaluation (the outcomes of your study e.g., experiences, attitudes, barriers) * Research type (e.g., qualitative, mixed-methods, case study, phenomenology, grounded theory)   NB. You’ll notice this guide asks questions in a different order to how articles are presented. There are more questions about your introduction later, and questions about your abstract and title appear later still. This is because we recommend beginning to write by first defining your research question, then describing your methods and results. |

* Make notes here:
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# Methods

## [Qualitative approach and research paradigm](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/qualitative-approach.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * If you used a guiding theory, what was it? * What were your qualitative approach and paradigm? Describe them in your own words. * Why did you choose them? * What key references influenced your approach? |

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## [Context](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/context.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * Where was the research conducted (its setting/site)? * Why did you choose this setting/site? * Did any salient cultural, political, historical, economic or other external factors influence your study?   Although most of this context will fit best in your methods section, you can also consider placing additional context with your findings in the Results section to add evidence for interpretations and enhance discussion of transferability. |

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## [Sampling strategy](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/sampling-strategy.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Describe how and why research participants, documents, or events were selected; criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary, and the rationale for those criteria. |

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## [Data collection methods](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/data-collection-methods.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * When did data collection begin and end? * Name your methods, and describe them step-by-step in sufficient detail to allow a reader to repeat them. * Why did you choose these methods? When justifying them, consider your research question, paradigm, approach, and other methods. * Who collected data? Describe any important characteristics of them, and any training they received for this study. |

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## [Data collection instruments and technologies](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/data-collection-instruments.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * List all data collection instruments (e.g., interview schedules, questionnaires) * Who developed them, and how? * Where can readers access them? Consider sharing them in the article, as a supplement, or via a repository like the OSF. * Describe any equipment you used for audio or video recordings. |

* Make notes here:
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## [Units of study](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/units-of-study.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Describe the number and relevant characteristics of participants, documents, or events included in the study. Describe the level of participation. |

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## [Data processing](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/data-processing.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * If you processed data before analysing it, when and how did you do this? (e.g., transcribing, anonymisation, data entry). * How did you process data during analysis? (E.g. coding, organising) * If you used transcripts, did you check accuracy in any way? * How did you maintain data security and protect the privacy or participants? |

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## [Data analysis](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/data-analysis.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| What was your unit of analysis?  If you used an approach that has a well-defined process for data analysis (e.g., grounded theory, discourse analysis, phenomenography):   * what literature guided you? (collate your references) * describe your processes in sufficient detail so readers can judge the extent to which your processes align with the guiding approach. * If you modified or deviated from the guiding approach, explain and justify these modifications.   Otherwise, describe your process step by step.  Who performed analysis steps?  Why did you choose this analysis process? |

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## [Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/ethics.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Did you receive ethical approval for this study? If so, what was the name of the review board, and what was the approval number?  If not, describe why.  What procedures did you use to protect participants? E.g.,   * How did you collect informed consent? If you didn’t, why not? * How did you ensure data security and integrity, if at all? * Did you anonymize participants, if at all?   If you offered compensation or incentives to facilitate participation, describe them. |

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## [Researcher characteristics and reflexivity](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/researcher-characteristics-and-reflexivity.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Introduce yourself and your team members so readers may understand your background, experience, and any other characteristics you feel may be relevant.  Upon beginning this study, did you or your team hold any perspectives, assumptions, prior knowledge or hypotheses (your “stance”)?  Describe how your characteristics or stance influenced choices you made when designing your study, and when collecting and analysing data.  Describe the researchers’ relationships to participants in the study and what decisions were made in light of these relationships.  Don’t be afraid of describing these – they’re not limitations! – reflexivity is a key strength in qualitative research. |

* Make notes here:
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## [Techniques to enhance trustworthiness](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/trustworthiness.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| What techniques did you use to enhance trustworthiness and credibility of data collection and analysis?  Some authors prefer to present this as a table, especially if submitting to a quantitative journal.  See [Lincoln and Guba’s Evaluative Criteria](http://www.qualres.org/HomeLinc-3684.html) for trustworthiness. |

* Make notes here:
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# Results

## [Synthesis and interpretation](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/synthesis-and-interpretation.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| What were your main findings? List them as bullet points. It’s often useful to begin your findings with a summary.  For each bullet point, make a note of variety and counter-examples.  If your findings include integration with prior literature or theory and/or the development of a theory, model or meta-narrative, consider using tables and figures and describe these as text placeholders (you’ll make real figures and tables after drafting).  Don’t worry about reporting exact frequency counts. Frequency counts play a limited role in qualitative research, and need not be reported unless they play a meaningful role in interpretation of the data. Instead, consider using words like “most”, “few”, “all”. |

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## [Links to empirical data](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/links-to-empirical-data.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| For your bullet points above, go through your data and select quotes/excerpts that you feel best exemplify your findings.  Depending on your target journal, your word limit may restrict the number of quotes you can include, so consider sharing evidence in a supplement or repository.  Remember to include evidence that show variety, disagreement, or nuance. |

* Make notes here:
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# Introduction (again)

## [Problem Formulation](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/problem-formulation.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Beyond summarising what is already known about your topic, your introduction should identify what remains *unknown* and how your research question addresses this knowledge gap.   * Bullet point what is already known with key references * Bullet point what is *not* known * Why is this gap important? * Look through your research question, and consider introducing your chosen sample, phenomena, design, evaluation, and research type. Why did you make these choices?   After you reorganise this document into a coherent narrative, this section will come directly before your research question. After this section, readers should be able to predict your research question and be familiar with the key terms you will use throughout your manuscript.  Think about how to structure your introduction to make the narrative clear and compelling.  Brainstorm ideas for a [strong opening](https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/resources/writers/introduction-strategies/). |

* Make notes here:
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# Discussion

## [Integration with prior work, implications, transferability, and contribution(s) to the field](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/integration-with-prior-work.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * How do your findings and conclusions relate to the literature you cited in your introduction? Do they challenge previous work, support it, or add new context? * How do your findings advance your field? * How might your findings transfer or generalize to other phenomena or fields? |

* Make notes here:
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## [Limitations](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/limitations.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| All research has limitations. The best researchers try hard to acknowledge them and discuss how they may have influenced findings.   * Look back at the items above, and consider whether your chosen paradigm, approach, and methods may influence the situations to which the findings may reasonably apply * Look at the items above, and list any that you did not (or could not do). Consider how these gaps may have influenced your findings. If not, why not? |

* Make notes here:
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# Other

## [Conflicts of interest](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/conflicts-of-interest.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * What conflicts of interest may have influenced the research? These could be financial, professional, or personal. * How might these have influenced the findings?   Some aspects may have been mentioned as part of Reflexivity. |

* Make notes here:
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## [Funding](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/funding.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| * List your sources of funding, including any grant codes. * Describe the role of your funders in data collection, analysis and reporting. |

* Make notes here:
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# Title & Abstract

## [Abstract](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/abstract.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| We recommend writing your abstract and title last.  Your abstract needs to paint an accurate and interesting summary of your work.   * If you have a target journal in mind, check their author instructions for limits on abstract length and structure. * It will be indexed by search engines, so look at your notes above and pick out the key phrases. * these key phrases should include:   + your phenomena of interest   + your methods, including the approach or perspective (e.g., general inductive, grounded theory),   + context (setting, time period),   + sample (number and key characteristics of participants, events, or documents),   + data collection strategies (e.g., observation, interview, focus group),   + and analysis techniques. * Craft these keywords into sentences that describe your research question and methods. Add a background sentence to justify why your research question is important. * Summarise your main findings (e.g., themes or inferences) and their implications.   Most journals invite authors to provide *keywords* in addition to the abstract, so if you struggle to include all key phrases within the abstract, consider providing them as keywords. Your abstract, title, and keywords will all be indexed, so to make your work as findable as possible, you should try to use as many different relevant terms as possible. |

* Make notes here:
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## [Title](https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/items/title.html)

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| Things To Consider |
| Your title should include the nature and topic of your study, whilst also sparking readers’ interest.  List the keywords you would like to include, and brainstorm options to discuss with your colleagues. |

* Make notes here:
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## How to cite

Describe how you used SRQR at the end of your Methods section, referencing the resources you used e.g.,

‘We used the SRQR reporting guideline(1) to draft this manuscript, and the SRQR reporting checklist(2) when editing, included in supplement A’

If you use a reporting checklist, remember to include it as a supplement when publishing so that readers can easily find information and see how you have interpreted the guidance.

1. O’Brien BC, Harris IB, Beckman TJ, Reed DA, Cook DA. Standards for reporting qualitative research: A synthesis of recommendations. Academic Medicine [Internet]. 2014 Sep;89(9):1245–51. Available from: <https://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/fulltext/2014/09000/Standards_for_Reporting_Qualitative_Research__A.21.aspx>

2. O’Brien BC, Harris IB, Beckman TJ, Reed DA, Cook DA. The SRQR reporting checklist. In: Harwood J, Albury C, Beyer J de, Schlüssel M, Collins G, editors. The EQUATOR network reporting guideline platform [Internet]. The UK EQUATOR Centre; 2025. Available from: [https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/srqr-checklist.docx](https://https:/jamesrharwood.github.io/equator-guidelines-website/guidelines/srqr/srqr-checklist.docx)