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Table 1: Codes (left, not bold), descriptive themes (bold), and analytic themes (right)

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| --- | --- |
| **Descriptive themes**  Codes | **Analytic Themes** |
| **What does this mean?**  What does this term mean?[1–5]  What does this item mean? [1–6]  How are these items different?[2, 4, 6, 7]  Have I understood this as intended? [1, 2]  Examples help me understand items [4, 8, 9]  **Why is this item important?**  Why is this item important? [2–4, 10]  Who is this item important to? [2, 4, 11]  **Does this apply to me?**  Have I understood the guideline’s scope as intended? [4, 5]  Does this item apply to me? [2, 4–7]  Is this item optional? [2, 6]  **I do not understand what reporting guidelines are**  What are reporting guidelines? [11, 12]  How should I use a reporting guideline? [13] | Researchers may not understand the guidance as intended, or what reporting guidelines are, even if they think they do |
| **Reporting guidelines benefit me**  I find guidelines useful in general [5, 14]  Guidelines make me feel confident [11]  Guidelines help me develop as a researcher [11, 15]  Guidelines may help me improve my manuscript [2, 7, 11, 14, 15]  I believe guidelines may help me publish more easily [16]  **I use guidelines because of other people**  I may use guidelines because journals and editors tell me to [11, 13, 15, 16]  I may use guidelines because other researchers expect it [13, 16]  **Guidelines benefit others**  Standardized reporting benefits the community [11, 16, 17]  **Some benefits are more important than others**  Immediate benefits are more important than hypothetical ones [11, 16]  Personal benefits are more important than benefits to others [16] | Researchers report a variety of reasons for using reporting guidelines, and that some are more important than others |
| **Researchers use reporting guidelines for different tasks**  I use reporting guidelines for planning research [2, 11]  I use reporting guidelines for designing research [6, 11, 12, 14]  I use reporting guidelines for writing [2, 6, 11, 14]  I use reporting guidelines for checking my own or other people’s writing [11, 12]  I use reporting guidelines to appraise the quality of other people’s reporting [3]  I use reporting guidelines for peer reviewing [11]  **I want guidance presented in formats that are better suited to the task I am doing**  I want items presented in the order in which I must do them [; [17]; [9]]  I want design or methods advice [2, 4, 11]  I want templates for writing [14]  I want checklists that are easy to fill in [5, 18]  I want checklists embedded into journal submission workflows [14]  I want items embedded into data collection tools [15] | Researchers report using reporting guidelines for different tasks and wanting guidance to be delivered in ways that better fit their needs |
| **Guidelines take time**  Guidelines take time to read, understand and apply [13, 15, 16]  Some items require extra work which takes time and effort [1, 2, 19]  I want an indication of which items to prioritize [2, 6]  Perceived complexity [2, 14, 16, 18]  Long guidelines are off-putting [5, 7, 11, 15]  **Itemization may decrease costs**  Itemization helps me navigate guidance[4]  Itemization summarizes the guidance[14]  **Itemization may increase perceived costs**  Itemization makes guidance appear longer[4]  Itemization blocks the bigger picture[2]  **I think guidelines make my manuscripts long and bloated**  Following reporting guidance can result in long, bloated articles [2, 6, 7, 15]  Long, bloated articles may exceed journal word limits [6, 7, 13, 18]  I want options for where to report this item [1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 13]  **The benefits of using a reporting guideline may not outweigh the costs**  The benefits of using a reporting guideline may not outweigh the costs [7, 11, 13]  **The balance of benefits vs costs may be more favourable when guidelines are used early**  Guidelines are more valuable when used early [2, 5, 11, 14] | Using reporting guidelines has costs, and researchers may not feel that benefits outweigh the costs |
| **I think the guidance could be improved**  I would clarify this item [4, 6]  I would move this item [1, 2]  I would split this item into two [2, 4, 9]  I would add or remove items from this guideline [2–4, 6]  I would add or remove requirements from this item [4, 6, 8, 10, 11]  **Guidelines need to be kept updated**  Guidelines can become out of date [2]  Guidelines need to be updated [4] | Reporting guidelines may need to be revised and updated for different reasons |
| **I feel unable to report this**  I cannot report this because I didn’t do it [2, 4, 6, 7]  I cannot report this because of intellectual property issues [7]  I cannot report this because it clashes with journal guidelines [4]  I cannot report this because data was missing from my primary studies [15]  Editors, reviewers or co-authors asked me to remove this item [6, 19]  **I feel nervous or uncertain if I am unable to report an item**  I feel uncertain because I don’t know how to say that I didn’t do it [4]  I feel worried that I will be judged for transparently reporting something I didn’t do [4, 11] | Researchers may not be able to report all items which can leave them feeling uncertain or worried |
| **I can only use what I know about and have**  I may not know that reporting guidelines exist, or what guidance exists [3, 5, 13, 14, 16]  I may not be able to easily access guidance [5, 16] | Awareness and accessibility may limit reporting guideline usage |
| **Reporting guidelines are more valuable to inexperienced researchers**  Reporting guidelines may be less valuable to experienced researchers [7, 11, 14]  Experienced researchers feel that they already know how to report [2, 11, 14]  Experienced researchers find guidance patronizing and feel untrusted [4, 7, 13, 18]  **Reporting guidelines can be hard to use at first but get easier with experience**  Reporting guidelines can be hard to use at first but get easier with experience [2, 13, 16] | Reporting guidelines may be more useful to less experienced researchers, but less experienced researchers may find them harder to use |
| **I want or need design advice**  I want design or methodological advice [4, 11, 18]  I don’t know how to do this item [2, 4, 6]  **I think this guidance prescribes how research should be designed**  Guidelines are procedural straightjackets [11]  This guideline is too prescriptive [4, 10, 11] | Researchers want or need design advice, but reporting guidelines may not be the right place |
| **A guideline’s scope can be unclear**  The guideline’s applicability criteria are not clear [3, 5, 14]  **A guideline can be too narrow**  This guideline isn’t a perfect fit for me [5]  This guideline doesn’t generalise [4, 10, 11, 14, 18]  **A guideline’s scope can be too broad**  I don’t want to see optional items that only apply to other types of study [5, 6] | Reporting guidelines can be harder to use if their scope is too broad, too narrow, or poorly defined |
| **I often need to adhere to multiple sets of guidance**  I need to adhere to journal guidelines or other research guidelines [4, 6, 13, 14]  I might need to use multiple reporting guidelines [11]  **I want guidelines to harmonize**  I want reporting guidelines to be linked or embedded [3, 4]  I want reporting guidelines to use similar structure [4]  I want reporting guidelines to use similar terms [4] | Researchers may have to use multiple sets of reporting guidelines, multiplying complexity and costs |
| **I experience reporting guidelines primarily as, or through, checklists**  I don’t like checklists[5, 7, 11, 14]  I may use the checklist instead of the full guidance [8] | Researchers may use checklists but never read the full guidance |

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