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Table 1: Codes, descriptive themes, and analytic themes

|  |  | Analytic theme |
| --- | --- | --- |
| What does this term mean? [1–5] | What does this mean? | Researchers may not understand the guidance as intended, or what reporting guidelines are, even if they think they do | | | What does this item mean? [1–6] | Why is this item important? | | | | How are these items different?[2, 4, 6, 7] | Does this apply to me? | | | | Have I understood this as intended? [1, 2] | I don’t understand what reporting guidelines are | | | | Examples help me understand items [4, 8, 9] | | | | | Why is this item important? [2–4, 10] | | | | | Who is this item important to? [2, 4, 11] | | | | | 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] | | | | | What are reporting guidelines? [11, 12] | | | | | How should I use a reporting guideline? [13] | | | | | |
| I find guidelines useful in general [5, 14] | Guidelines benefit me | Researchers report a variety of reasons for using reporting guidelines, and that some are more important than others | | | Guidelines make me feel confident [11] | I use guidelines because of other people | | | | Guidelines help me develop as a researcher [11, 15] | Guidelines benefit others | | | | Guidelines may help me improve my manuscript [2, 7, 11, 14, 15] | Some benefits are more important than others | | | | I believe guidelines may help me publish more easily [16] | | | | | 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] | | | | | Standardized reporting benefits the community [11, 16, 17] | | | | | Immediate benefits are more important than hypothetical ones [11, 16] | | | | | Personal benefits are more important than benefits to others [16] | | | | | |
| I use reporting guidelines for planning research [2, 11] | Researchers use reporting guidelines for different tasks | Researchers report using reporting guidelines for different tasks and wanting guidance to be delivered in ways that better fit their needs | | | I use reporting guidelines for designing research [6, 11, 12, 14] | I want guidance presented in formats that are better suited to the task I am doing | | | | 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 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] | | | | | |
| Guidelines take time to read, understand and apply [13, 15, 16] | Guidelines take time | Using reporting guidelines has costs, and researchers may not feel that benefits outweigh the costs | | | Some items require extra work which takes time and effort [1, 2, 19] | Itemization may decrease costs | | | | I want an indication of which items to prioritize [2, 6] | Itemization may increase perceived costs | | | | Perceived complexity [2, 14, 16, 18] | I think guidelines make my manuscripts long and bloated | | | | Long guidelines are off-putting [5, 7, 11, 15] | The benefits of using a reporting guideline may not outweigh the costs | | | | Itemization helps me navigate guidance[4] | The balance of benefits vs costs may be more favourable when guidelines are used early | | | | Itemization summarizes the guidance[14] | | | | | Itemization makes guidance appear longer[4] | | | | | Itemization blocks the bigger picture[2] | | | | | 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 [7, 11, 13] | | | | | Guidelines are more valuable when used early [2, 5, 11, 14] | | | | | |
| I would clarify this item [4, 6] | I think the guidance could be improved | Reporting guidelines may need to be revised and updated for different reasons | | | I would move this item [1, 2] | Guidelines need to be kept updated | | | | 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 can become out of date [2] | | | | | Guidelines need to be updated [4] | | | | | |
| I cannot report this because I didn’t do it | I feel unable to report this | Researchers may not be able to report all items which can leave them feeling uncertain or worried | | [2, 4, 6, 7] | I feel nervous or uncertain if I am unable to report an item | | | | 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 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] | | | | | |
| I may not know that reporting guidelines exist, or what guidance exists [3, 5, 13, 14, 16] | I can only use what I know about and have | Awareness and accessibility may limit reporting guideline usage | | | I may not be able to easily access guidance [5, 16] | | | | | |
| Reporting guidelines may be less valuable to experienced researchers [7, 11, 14] | Reporting guidelines are more valuable to inexperienced researchers | Reporting guidelines may be more useful to less experienced researchers, but less experienced researchers may find them harder to use | | | Experienced researchers feel that they already know how to report [2, 11, 14] | Reporting guidelines can be hard to use at first but get easier with experience | | | | 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 [2, 13, 16] | | | | | |
| I want design or methodological advice [4, 11, 18] | I want or need design advice | Researchers want or need design advice, but reporting guidelines may not be the right place | | | 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] | | | | | |
| The guideline’s applicability criteria are not clear [3, 5, 14] | A guideline’s scope can be unclear | Reporting guidelines can be harder to use if their scope is too broad, too narrow, or poorly defined | | | This guideline isn’t a perfect fit for me [5] | A guideline can be too narrow | | | | This guideline doesn’t generalise [4, 10, 11, 14, 18] | A guideline’s scope can be too broad | | | | This guideline is too prescriptive [4, 10, 11] | | | | | I don’t want to see optional items that only apply to other types of study [5, 6] | | | | | |
| I need to adhere to journal guidelines or other research guidelines [4, 6, 13, 14] | Authors often need to adhere to multiple sets of guidance | Researchers may have to use multiple sets of reporting guidelines, multiplying complexity and costs | | | 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] | | | | | |
| I don’t like checklists[5, 7, 11, 14] | I experience reporting guidelines primarily as, or through, checklists | Researchers may use checklists but never read the full guidance | | | I may use the checklist instead of the full guidance [8] | | | | | I may use the checklist before I read the full guidance [8] | | | | | |

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