

# Plain Language Summaries

## Author Guidelines for Development, Submission & Publication

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### Description

Plain language summaries (PLS) communicate the significance of scientific research evidence to a broad audience, including patients and professionals in nearby disciplines, in jargon-free and clear language.

PLS can describe clinical trials and other original research, review articles, case reports, and congress abstracts, among other scientific publications. Submission of PLS is optional, but encouraged, for the reasons outlined below.

As an author, expanding the reach of your work by engaging with a wider audience can help you:

- Enable the reader to capture the content quickly and bookmark the paper for in-depth reading
- Attract more readers, increasing access to the article and its associated metrics
- Connect with patients, caregivers, policy makers, and other decision-makers
- Connect with non-specialist healthcare professionals from other fields
- Improve access to scientific data in a format that is easy to understand
- Translate complex science into practical knowledge and initiatives
- Expand your professional network and enhance your reputation.

Crucially, PLS improve public engagement with science and medical research. By helping the public to understand biomedical research, researchers can contribute to raising awareness of its value and attracting further public support, engagement, and involvement.

### Author Instructions

To be eligible for indexing on PubMed, the plain language summary should be **250 words or less**, written in English, and submitted in plain text, continuous prose format. It should be placed after the Abstract and before the Introduction, with its own heading (“Plain Language Summary”). In addition, the PLS should:

- Be distinct from the abstract and written in easy-to-understand language rather than complex words (see [Universal Patient Language](#)).
- Provide answers to the questions: Why was the study done? What did the researchers do and find? What do the results mean? What is the objective influence on the wider field?
- Keep statements factual and **avoid providing opinions or speculation** on the study’s findings and significance. It is of primary importance that the PLS not be misleading.
- Use the active voice rather than the passive voice (for example, “Dr Smith’s team report several improvements” rather than “Several improvements were reported by Dr Smith’s team”).
- Use short, clear sentences and phrase sentences in neutral language, remaining as objective as possible.
- Use person-centered language rather than focusing on the condition/illness or disability.
- Avoid jargon, complex grammatical structures, or abbreviations. If you need to use a technical term or abbreviation, explain it the first time you use it.

Once your PLS is complete (or during the writing process), ask someone who doesn’t have any knowledge of the subject to read the PLS and provide feedback. They should find it interesting and be able to understand the study, its conclusions, and the potential impact of the research.

For further information on how to write about biomedical and health research in plain English, please read the [INVOLVE Plain English Summaries](#) resource from the National Institute for Health Research.

### Graphical Plain Language Summaries

As mentioned previously, plain language summaries must be submitted in a plain text, continuous prose format; this is important to ensure that the PLS can be indexed on PubMed. However, you may submit a graphical representation of the PLS (Graphical PLS) **in addition to** the text PLS.

The Graphical PLS will be published:

- Below the Abstract and text PLS on the article hosting page and;
- Within the HTML and typeset articles.

Please note that Graphical PLS **cannot be indexed** on PubMed.

#### → *Graphical PLS & Graphical Abstracts*

While a Graphical PLS serves a different purpose than a Graphical Abstract, the publication process is the same for both. Therefore, to ensure your Graphical PLS can be considered for publication, please follow the guidelines we have in place for Graphical Abstracts, available at <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/writing-your-paper/using-keywords-to-write-title-and-abstract/#graphicalabstracts>.

If a Graphical PLS **and** a Graphical Abstract are submitted, both will be published within the full-text HTML and typeset articles. However, **only one** can be published on the article hosting page alongside the plain-text Abstract and plain-text PLS. Thus, please let the journal editor know which graphic you would like published in that position. The other graphic will need to be cited as a figure in the manuscript and will then appear in the HTML/typeset articles near the location of the first citation.

#### → *Supplementary Material*

Graphical PLS may also be published as supplementary material, which is published alongside the full-text HTML article under the “Supplemental Material” tab and hosted on [Figshare](#) as open access content. For these PLS, please include in the footer:

- Article citation (e.g., Author names. Article title. Journal abbreviation. Year.)
- Link to the article on Taylor & Francis Online and/or article DOI

In addition, we ask that the Taylor & Francis logo, which can be requested from the journal editor, be added to the top of the first page.

Please let the journal editor know if you wish to publish your Graphical PLS as supplemental material.

### Submission & Publication

Taylor & Francis offers two options for submitting your plain language summary:

1. **[Preferred] At time of manuscript submission.** The PLS is peer reviewed at the same time as the manuscript, included in the published article, available with the manuscript’s abstract on the article hosting page, and indexed on PubMed. This is the preferred route of submission.

2. **Post publication.** This option is available for one year following article date of publication and incurs a processing fee of \$1200/€1000/£850. Where possible, the PLS is peer reviewed by the manuscript's original reviewers. After acceptance for publication, the PLS is available alongside the manuscript's abstract on the article hosting page, as well as added to the HTML version of the article as a minor correction (the correction notice will state that a PLS has been added to the article). However, it is NOT added to the typeset article nor indexed on PubMed.

For Option #1, please submit your PLS as part of the manuscript Word document file (under the heading "Plain Language Summary") that is uploaded during the submission process. For Option #2, please submit the PLS directly to the journal editor via their email address. These options apply to both text PLS and Graphical PLS.

### Copyright

Plain language summaries are subject to the same publication agreement or open access license as the published article. Please refer to the journal's Instructions for Authors for the specific publication agreements and open access licenses available.

Similar to journal abstracts, all PLS (including Graphical PLS) are **freely available to read** on [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com). The article URL may be freely shared in articles, other written materials, and through online resources, such as social media.

If you have questions about PLS, or specific queries about how PLS can be re-used based on the article's publication agreement or open access license, please contact your T&F journal editor. The journal editor can also provide examples of text and graphic PLS.

### Quick Guide: Where Are PLS Located upon Publication?

	Article Hosting Page	HTML Article	Typeset Article*	PubMed	Supplemental Material
<b>Text PLS</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Graphical PLS</b> (single graphic)	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Graphical PLS</b> (multiple pages)					✓
<b>Post publication†</b> (text or graphical PLS)	✓	✓			
✓ = free access; ✓ = free access if article is open access * Published online as PDF/ePub; published in print if journal offers print edition † Permitted for 1 year following article publication					