



Writing Tips for The Monitor

Did You Know?

Anyone can write for *The Monitor*. You do not have to be a member of ACRP or APPI. The Editorial Board will consider **any** article, by **anyone**, on **any** subject pertinent to clinical research, **anytime** it is submitted. So start writing!

Do

- **Start** by telling the readers what the paper is going to discuss and why. In other words, tell readers what your paper is going to talk about, and tell them what you expect them to take away from reading it.
- **Spell out all acronyms and abbreviations** the first time you use them. Then use the acronyms and abbreviations consistently after that. Even editors have to look up things like AAHRPP, CISC RP, and CDISC, and since *Monitor* issues get passed around from ACRP members to nonmembers, many readers (especially those from other countries) will not necessarily know a CRA from a CRC unless you explain it to them.
- **Use the full, correct names of any organizations.** For example, OHRP is *not* the Office of Human Research Protections; it is the Office **for** Human Research Protections. Little errors like this make it look as if you are not being careful about your sources.
- **Watch time references.** A reference to “this year” or “next year” in the article you submit in October might be incorrect when we publish it in February. Be specific.
- **Explain the basic facts about infamous problematic research**, whether modern or historic, if you must refer to it. Do not assume that everyone will readily remember or understand what the TeGenero incident was, why Tuskegee is an example of unethical practices, or that thalidomide was never approved in the U.S., etc.
- **Document the source of any statistics**—where acquired and how old the data are, because timeliness and reliability are important to readers. A five-year old estimate of how much research activity is expected

in a particular region based on a small survey from a marketing firm is quite different from a one-year old estimate based on a large survey by an independent nonprofit firm.

- **Stick to the facts.** Qualitative phrases that betray your personal feelings belong in opinion articles, not in peer-reviewed pieces describing professional practices.
- **Be accurate about ACRP's structure,** events, certifications, etc., if mentioning it in your article. We often must correct authors on such basic items as the kinds of certifications we offer, the full name of our conference, etc.
- **Make your article gender neutral** as much as possible. "First-in-man," "mankind," and "manpower" become "first-in-human," "humankind," and "labor," for example, and not all doctors are "he."
- **Make a conclusion** that reiterates the point of the paper and summarizes the takeaway points.
- **Illustrate with tables, figures, and bulleted or numbered lists** where appropriate. They break up the text and are easier for people to grasp. Give each figure/table a name and a number and reference it in the text. It cannot – and probably will not – fall exactly where it is mentioned in the text. (So step-by-step explanations with figures, which work so well in slide presentations, don't work very well in print.) Visualizing the article in print will help.
- **Use subheads** to break up the text – not too many, but definitely a few.
- **Reference your sources** as appropriate. Use sequential numbers in the text, and list the references at the end (numbered correspondingly in order of appearance). Ensure that the citations and the reference list match, and verify all references against the original sources. Each reference must start by listing all authors, then year of publication, title of article, and full journal name followed by volume and issue numbers and page numbers.

Don't

- **Don't** use first person.
- **Don't** try to be "formal"; just write the paper. The peer reviewers will give you advice and guidance on how to improve and polish it. If it is accepted, your paper will then get copyedited at the headquarters office. So do not be too concerned about **how** you say something; be more concerned about **what** you have to say.
- **Don't** put two spaces after a period. Removing dozens or hundreds of extra spaces from your article can be awkward and time consuming.
- **Don't** use regionally idiosyncratic phrases or pop culture references; they will not mean anything to readers in other countries.
- **Don't** make promotional statements that refer to your company or your product or otherwise promote a specific company or product in any manner.

How Many Figures?

The word-limit (2,000-2,500 words) produces four print pages, the average length of an article in *The Monitor*. One or two figures on one page is fine; more than that looks "cluttered" and is hard for readers to follow. With the three-column format, any large (screenshot) figure will span at least two columns, and still might not be readable.

Questions?

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