

# PRESENTING AND PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE

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as long as the size of the message. Readers of large randomised multicentre trials need to know as much detail about the study as possible; reports on small and simple trials should be brief.

**Introduction** . This should always be short. A brief background of the study should be presented and then the aims of the trial or audit outlined.

**Methods** . The methodology and study design should be given in detail. It is important to identify potential biases. New techniques or investigations should be detailed in full; if they are common practice or have been described elsewhere, this should be referenced instead of described.

**Results** . Results are almost always best shown diagrammatically using tables and figures. Results shown in the form of a diagram need not then be duplicated in the text.

**Discussion** . It is important not to repeat the introduction or reiterate the results in this section. The study should be interpreted intelligently and any suggestions for future studies or changes in management should be made. It is prudent not to indulge in flights of fantasy or wild imagination about future possibilities; most journal editors will delete these. Recently, a standard format for the discussion section has been promoted, and journals such as the *BMJ* are keen that authors use it.

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