

Special circumstances for Cochrane Systematic Reviews

There are special circumstances when similarity in text is expected in Cochrane Systematic Reviews by the nature of the type of work. These special circumstances may result in text similarity software, such as CrossCheck (see *Table*), finding a high level of similarity of the Cochrane Review text with text from other article(s). High levels of similarity would not always be considered plagiarism.

Table. Special circumstances that will generate high levels of text similarity between Cochrane Systematic Reviews, versions of Cochrane Systematic Reviews, and other articles

Special circumstance	Text similarity expected?
Similar methods sections	Yes, Cochrane Reviews can be expected to have a high percentage of overlap in the methods section because of standardized methods. This is unlikely to cause concern unless text is copied verbatim and without correct citation
Cochrane Review Group-specific template used for text in one or more sections	Yes, if an author uses a Cochrane Review Group template for one or more sections (e.g. background, methods), and states that a template has been used, a high percentage of overlap would be expected and should not cause concern See ' Use of text templates ' for details
Protocol to review, review to update, etc.	Yes, a high percentage of overlap would be expected between certain sections of these versions (e.g. background, methods) and should not cause concern
Generic protocol (i.e. two or more reviews based on one protocol)	Yes, a high percentage of overlap would be expected between certain sections of the protocol and the reviews that follow the protocol (e.g. background, methods). This should not cause concern, but it should be clear to the reader that the same text is used across a series of linked reviews
Split and merged reviews (i.e. review either split into two or more reviews, or two or more reviews are combined into one review)	Yes, some overlap would be expected between the different reviews. This should not cause concern, but it should be clear to the reader that the same text is used across a series of linked reviews
Similarities with published studies (e.g. trials described in the characteristics tables/risk of bias tables)	Yes, some overlap would be accepted here. Authors should follow the guidance (see Avoiding plagiarism) to avoid the possibility of plagiarism
Co-publication of a Cochrane Review (including Protocol and Updates) or republication in official Cochrane journals or derivative products	Yes, a high level of overlap would be expected. This should not cause concern as long as the co-publication was agreed according to the policy
A non-Cochrane systematic review is converted to a Cochrane Review	Yes, a high level of overlap may be expected. This should not cause concern as long as the co-publication was agreed according to the policy