

# Avoiding plagiarism

- [Use of text templates](#)
- [Cochrane Overviews of reviews \(Cochrane Overviews\)](#)

A Cochrane Review is expected to be an original piece of academic work produced by the listed authors. Material copied from other sources may be used but should always be acknowledged. If direct quotes of more than a few words of original material are included, these should generally be indicated both by using quotation marks **and** by citing the source (citation alone is not enough). See *Table* for examples.

## Examples of correct citation

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Citing</b>   | The study was successful (Griffin 1990); it confirmed previous findings (Howes 1995).   |
| <b>Paraphrasing: using own words and making the source clear from the reference</b> | It is the responsibility of systematic review authors to ensure the review conforms to Cochrane reporting guidelines including: declaring any potential conflicts of interest, that the review is free from plagiarised material and that all contributors are acknowledged (Wager 2011). |
| <b>Using text verbatim</b>  | Wager and colleagues proposed that authors should "...ensure that contributors are properly acknowledged, that potential conflicts of interest are declared, and that the review does not contain plagiarized material" (Wager 2011).   |

In the above *Table*, the next notes that "It is the responsibility of systematic review authors to ensure the review conforms to Cochrane reporting guidelines including... (Wager 2011)." These are the author's own words, and the source is clear from the reference. To use a sentence directly from the Wager paper, the author would have had to do so by using quotation marks, constructing a different sentence citing the reference in brackets immediately afterwards. For example:

Wager and Wiffen proposed that authors should "...ensure that contributors are properly acknowledged, that potential conflicts of interest are declared, and that the review does not contain plagiarized material" (Wager 2011).

Citations should be placed as close as possible to the quotation or statement from the original source. For example, if a paragraph includes two quotations, the appropriate citation should be inserted immediately after the relevant quotation and not placed together at the end of the paragraph or section. See the [Cochrane Style Manual](#) for information about references and citing references in the text.

Cochrane Review Groups are encouraged to bring the plagiarism policy to the attention of authors early in the review development cycle, such as when authors propose a title for a Cochrane Review.

## Use of text templates

As Cochrane Review Groups have evolved, there has been an increasing use of templates that ensure methods are clearly presented. However, the result is that reviews may include material that is similar or identical to that in other reviews, to an extent that might not be permissible in articles published in other journals. For example, reviews may use standard methods resulting in similar text and some Cochrane Review Groups encourage the use of standard introductory passages (e.g. to describe a condition or intervention).

**Therefore, protocols and reviews that include template text should include a statement acknowledging the use of templates**, such as "The background and methods section of this protocol/review is based on a standard template used by Cochrane [insert name] Review Group". This statement may be appropriate to include in the 'Acknowledgements' section.

## Cochrane Overviews of reviews (Cochrane Overviews)

"Cochrane Overviews of reviews (Cochrane Overviews) are Cochrane Reviews designed to compile evidence from multiple systematic reviews of interventions into one accessible and usable document" (see the [Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Intervention, Chapter 22](#)). Authors may wish to reuse text from the original systematic reviews in a Cochrane Overview. In this circumstance, authors should follow the standard guidance to reference source material. A high percentage of overlap with other source content (e.g. a Cochrane Review) may occur, but will not cause concern if the text has been cited appropriately.