Table 1, General guidance to authors for preparing a manuscript

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| Item | Guidance |
| Title and authors | This should appear on a separate from details of author(s); Aim for the title to be 12 words or less and if reporting the findings of research you should state the study design. |
| Abstract | Check guidelines about presentation, structure and word count. |
| Key words/terms | These should enable potential readers to rapidly search and access your work and so select these carefully. |
| Word count | It is important to know the word limit from the outset and ensure the balance of your manuscript between the different sections. |
| Structure of paper and sub-headings | If your manuscript is reporting the findings of study, it is wise to follow the conventions. Use headings to guide the reader and introduce new content. Incorporate your search terms as appropriate into sub-headings as this will also help potential authors to locate and retrieve your work. Some journals will give very specific instructions on the headings and sub-headings they require you to use. |
| Study design | Depending on the type of research you may be reporting, there is an expectation in some journals that you follow specific guidance. For example [PRISMA](http://prisma-statement.org/) statements describe how systematic reviews and meta-analyses should be presented, whereas [SRQR](http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/srqr/) details recommendations for qualitative research studies. |
| Referencing style | Confirm whether the referencing style is Harvard, modified Harvard or Vancouver, or another specific style, and adopt this from the outset; some publications may specify the number of references permitted (and perhaps that they all need to be within the past five years) and advise on selective sources. |
| Inclusion of photographs, tables, graphs | Many journals will detail the number of each permitted per manuscript and whether these will appear in colour or monochrome. If including photographs of people, you may need to submit a signed consent form. |
| Ethical issues | Journals may vary in their coverage and reporting of ethical processes, in addition in some cases there may be a requirement to submit a reference number and the institution giving approval for the study. Note that some journals will also expect favourable ethical review for service improvements and audits of practice. |
| Letter to editor | A letter to the editor is sometimes included as part of submitting a manuscript for publication. This should state that the paper has not been sent to other journals, describe the contribution of each author, and a declaration that there are no conflicts of interest between contributors and the content. |
| Summary boxes | Submission of manuscript may entail inclusion of summary boxes on each paper around ‘What is known about the topic’ ‘What this paper adds’ or ‘implications for practice’. |
| Formatting | Requirements may be around double spacing, wide margins, font size and type and use of conventional statistical symbols. Some journals any less prescriptive with specific formatting coming later in the process, after acceptance. |