

Continuing Professional Development

Suggestions for writing time out activities for CPD articles

THERE are three types of time out activities:

1. Formative activities – activities that are integral to the text and part of the learning process.
2. Summative activities – activities that check knowledge at relevant points in the article.
3. Portfolio activities – activities that encourage readers to reflect on what they have learned and how they can apply this to previous or future practice or patient care and the requirements of revalidation.

Several types of time out activities can be used in an article, for example:

- » Matching lists of information
- » Brief written answers to questions
- » Interpretation of information provided in a diagram or chart
- » Discuss examples from practice
- » Responses to a case study in the article
- » Prioritising a list of points
- » Summarise information provided in the article
- » Write up definitions of complex terms

Useful verbs to consider when writing time out activities are:

- » Analyse
- » Differentiate
- » Identify
- » Illustrate
- » List
- » Outline
- » Reflect
- » Select

Time out activities should be:

- » Frequent
- » Varied
- » Interesting
- » Useful
- » Challenging, but do-able within a short time period not longer than 30 minutes

A minimum of five and a maximum of ten time out activities should be included in each article. The purpose of these is to encourage readers stop and think about what they are reading and relate it to their current practice or experience, or to the four themes of The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives, published by the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) (2015), which are: Prioritise people, Practise effectively, Preserve safety, and Promote professionalism and trust.

Each time out activity should have a clear purpose – for example, it may test whether readers have achieved one of the

stated learning outcomes, or it could introduce a new idea by asking readers to think about, and then write down, what they understand by a particular term or concept.

You could ask readers to discuss a particular aspect of nursing practice with senior colleagues for example, or ask someone from another professional group, for example a physiotherapist or pharmacist, what their understanding is of a particular patient's health needs.

Another angle you might take is to ask readers to compare two views or concepts that have been presented, listing the advantages or disadvantages of each. In another section, you might get readers to apply the information in the article to a patient in the clinical area and identify what actions they might take or how this would change their future practice.

It is good practice to include within the article some commentary, debriefing or feedback for each time out activity. This does not necessarily mean providing the right answer – often there are no right answers. Rather, you should give readers an indication of whether they are on the right track or comment on any difficulty they might have had. You could suggest where they might find further information or help as necessary. Equally, you might raise another aspect of the topic: 'I wonder if you considered X when you thought about/discussed this issue. X is relevant here in terms of...'

The time out activity should be cited first and be followed by the text that relates to it.

Examples of time out activities:

TIME OUT

The first step in developing mindfulness is becoming aware of how distracted you often are. When caring for patients, start to become aware of where your attention is and to what extent you are 'present' with the person you are caring for. At the end of your shift, write down what distracts you and draws your attention away from providing care. You may wish to consider:

- » Sensory experience: smells, sounds, pain and hunger.
- » Emotions: such as those arising that might make it difficult to focus and be present.
- » Thoughts: 'mental chatter' about issues that you are not immediately concerned with, planning for what is next, or making judgements about the situation.

TIME OUT

Spend 10 minutes reflecting on what you have learned from reading this article and completing the time out activities. Think about the following:

- » What effect have the time out activities had on you? What have you observed as a result of completing them?
- » How has your understanding of mindfulness and self-compassion changed?

- » Have you noticed any areas of your work that have been influenced by reading this article?

TIME OUT

Identify three actions you intend to take to explore mindfulness and self-compassion further. For example, purchasing one of the books in the reference list of this article or finding out about mindfulness training offered at work. Write down these actions and put them somewhere you are likely to see them regularly until you have completed them.

TIME OUT

Read the NICE (2014) guideline on the identification, assessment and management of obesity. Are you implementing this guidance in your practice? List three improvements that could be made to your practice as a result of reading the guideline and think about how you could disseminate this information to your colleagues.

TIME OUT

Explore what national, regional and local health promotion programmes are available in your practice setting that address weight loss and physical activity. Obtain detailed information on three programmes to which you refer patients. Evaluate how accessible these programmes are to the general population. How often do you refer patients at risk of diabetes to appropriate resources? How can you improve the frequency and quality of your referrals?

TIME OUT

How does your knowledge of obesity, particularly the accumulation of abdominal fat, affect your responsibility to provide nutrition education and weight management for at-risk individuals? How could you better fulfil this responsibility in your practice?