Author guidelines

Practical skills: 'How to' modules

These author guidelines will help you submit a 'How to' module for publication on RCNi Learning (**rcnilearning.com**), an interactive online learning resource for nurses and nursing students accredited by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Centre for Professional Accreditation. For further information on publishing with RCNi go to **rcni.com/write-us**

Purpose
The main purpose of 'How to' modules is to support training and demonstrate best practice in practical skills and procedures. Modules must include current evidence and have clear and feasible learning objectives that are supported by the content.

Peer review and accreditation
'How to' modules are subject to peer review and RCN accreditation.

Structure
'How to' modules have no introduction or conclusion and should be structured as follows:
» A short rationale and key points.
» Keywords.
» Learning objectives – between three and five learning objectives are usually enough.
» Three questions about the procedure discussed in the module to test users' knowledge ('What do you know?'). Users will be asked these three questions again once they have completed the module ('What have you learned?').
» The preparatory steps for the procedure and a list of the equipment required to perform it.
» A clear step-by-step description of the procedure. The steps should be numbered and kept concise.
» Between three and five learning points after the 'procedure' section.
» A short discussion of the evidence base for the procedure. This section needs to be adequately referenced.
» Between three and five learning points after the 'evidence base' section.
» A reflective practice activity encouraging users to reflect on how the module has helped them update their practice.
» Useful resources.
» References.
» A multiple-choice quiz comprising five questions as well as the answers and rationales for these.

We recommend that, before writing a 'How to' module, authors look at published examples to see how they are structured. For published examples go to **rcnilearning.com/online-learning-for-nurses/practical-skills**

Length
'How to' modules should contain a maximum of 2,000 words excluding the learning points, references and any boxes, tables, figures, photographs or multimedia elements. Modules exceeding the maximum word count will be returned to authors for cutting before peer review.

Style and tone

When writing a 'How to' module, you should keep users in mind, in particular their professional level and experience, and where appropriate the specialty in which they work. The module requires a consistent and user-friendly tone. The style should be professional but straightforward and does not need to be overly academic.

You should aim to make the module factual, clear, concise and evidence based. Information must be accessible, accurate and unambiguous. Think about the best way to present the information: it may be more clearly understood as a list of bullet points, box, table or figure. Seek to teach users rather than suggest a particular course of action. The use of jargon and abbreviations should be avoided. Acronyms should be written in full at first mention and, if used again, abbreviated thereafter. For example: Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) at first mention, NMC thereafter. Modules that refer to policy or legislation must state the country to which it applies.

Boxes, tables and figures

Boxes, tables and figures can be a useful way of conveying information while introducing variety.
» Boxes may contain a simple bulleted list (for example, a list of symptoms) or text (for example, a case study).
» Tables must present information in rows and columns.
» Figures may include graphs, bar or column charts, pie charts, diagrams, illustrations and photographs.

Boxes, tables and figures must be numbered, captioned and cited in the module in their order of appearance. They should be easy to read and uncluttered. All symbols and abbreviations should be explained. Sources should be indicated and included in the references.

Tables and figures are usually redrawn by RCNi. The editorial team at RCNi may decide not to keep all tables and figures supplied. Regarding permission to reproduce existing materials, refer to the 'Permissions and ethics' section of this document. Images retrieved from the internet cannot be used.

Videos, animations and podcasts

Users seek engaging, visual and interactive content. Authors are therefore encouraged to consider using videos, animations, podcasts and other multimedia elements to support and enhance their 'How to' module. You can supply the material or include links in the body text.

Authors are also encouraged to discuss the content and relevance of their module in a short video or podcast, which RCNi staff can help produce. Alternatively, RCNi staff can interview authors. The video or podcast should be no more than 5 minutes long and can be framed as follows:
» Introduction to the author(s), their role, clinical experience and interests.
» What prompted them to write the module.
» Why the subject is important for nurses.
» New developments in the area.
» Any challenges related to nursing care.
» Debunking myths or outdated practices.

Guidelines on submitting audio clips and videos are available at **rcni.com/write-us/author-guide-downloads**

References

It is your responsibility to ensure that your 'How to' module is accurately and appropriately referenced using the current literature and primary sources. Unless you are citing seminal work, you must use references published within the past ten years. References that can be accessed online are preferred. References to Wikipedia articles are not accepted.

The reference list must be placed at the end of the module under the subheading 'References'. Any formatting from reference management software, such as EndNote or Reference Manager, must be removed before submission.

Please adhere to the Harvard system of referencing, exemplified below.

Reference citations in the module

» **One author:** Community-acquired pneumonia has high morbidity and mortality rates (Müller 2015).
» **Two authors:** Blandin and Pepin (2017) argue that grief occurs in anticipation of multiple losses over time.
» **More than two authors:** Stokes et al (2017) believe that trauma-informed care is an area where nurses' knowledge is limited.
» **If two or more references are cited simultaneously, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent:** Differing management approaches can be a barrier to pain management (Neville and Roan 2014, Morley et al 2015).
» **If there are two or more references to the same author, the order must also be chronological:** For adults with substance use disorder, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2007, 2011) guidelines support the use of brief interventions.

References in the reference list

References must be listed in alphabetical order. If there are two or more references to the same author, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent. Please include digital object identifiers (DOIs) if available.

Journals

» **One author:** Müller F (2015) Oral hygiene reduces the mortality from aspiration pneumonia in frail elders. Journal of Dental Research. 94, 3 Suppl, 14S-16S. doi: 10.1177/0022034514552494
» **Two authors:** Blandin K, Pepin R (2017) Dementia grief: a theoretical model of a unique grief experience. Dementia. 16, 1, 67-78. doi: 10.1177/1471301215581081
» **Three authors:** Hunt PA, Greaves I, Owens WA (2006) Emergency thoracotomy in thoracic trauma: a review. Injury. 37, 1, 1-19. doi: 10.1016/j.injury.2005.02.014
» **More than three authors:** Stokes Y, Jacob JD, Gifford W et al (2017) Exploring nurses' knowledge and experiences related to trauma-informed care. Global Qualitative Nursing Research. 4. doi: 10.1177/2333393617734510

Books

Webster S, de Wreede R (2016) Embryology at a Glance. Second edition. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

Chapters in books

McErlean L (2017) The digestive system. In Peate I, Nair M (Eds) Fundamentals of Anatomy and Physiology for Nursing and Healthcare Students. Second edition. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 257-298.

Websites
Children's Liver Disease Foundation (2020) About Us. childliverdisease.org/about-us
(Last accessed: 11 January 2022.)

NICE guidelines
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2019) Delirium: Prevention, Diagnosis and
Management. Clinical guideline No. 103. NICE, London.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unreferenced use of other people's work or ideas – published or unpublished –
or of your own published work. Plagiarism includes copying or paraphrasing a sentence, paragraph,
box, table or figure from another person's (or your own) work without appropriate referencing.

Your 'How to' module must be your own work and should be written in your own words.
All mentions of other people's work must be attributed to the original author(s) and referenced
in full. Direct quotes must be reproduced verbatim between single quotation marks.

All 'How to' modules submitted to RCNi Learning are checked for plagiarism using automated
software. This generates a 'similarity report' which shows any matches between text in your module
and text in published content. The module may be rejected based on the similarity report.

Permissions and ethics

If you plan to use substantial sections of text or illustrations from a source protected by copyright,
you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder before submission. If permission has
not been secured, we may not be able to use the material.

Figures previously published elsewhere may be used but will usually be protected by copyright,
so you must seek permission from the publisher to reproduce them before submitting the module.
Where permission has been granted this should be acknowledged in the text and evidence should
be provided to RCNi. Please allow sufficient time to gain permission from the publisher, which can
take up to 12 weeks.

All patient names should be changed to pseudonyms to protect patient confidentiality. If your
module includes a case study based on a real patient, you must obtain their written consent to use
their details in the context of the module.

If you supply photographs with your module, you must obtain consent from the people in the
photographs.

For further information on RCNi's ethical guidelines go to **rcni.com/submit-an-article-ethics**
RCNi is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which advises editors and
publishers on all aspects of publication ethics. For more information go to **publicationethics.org**

Authorship

To be credited as an 'author', three minimum requirements must be met:
» Making a substantial contribution to the work.
» Being accountable for the work and its published form.
» Having reviewed and approved the module before submission.

Author guidelines

If people involved in a module do not meet these requirements, they should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' and their specific contribution to the module stated. See below under 'Acknowledgements'.

In a co-authored module, it is the authors' responsibility to decide jointly both the order of authors and whether a person credited as an author should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' instead. This must be decided before submitting the module. All authors must meet the minimum requirements stated above. The corresponding author is responsible for notifying RCNi of changes to authorship.

Conflict of interest
Each author must declare any interest, financial or other, that could have inappropriately influenced their work. If there are no conflicts of interest to declare, a statement such as 'None declared' should be provided.

Acknowledgements
Short acknowledgements can be made to people, organisations or groups of people. The acknowledgement should specify how they have contributed to the module. If you wish to acknowledge a specific person or organisation, you must contact them and ask them to approve, in writing, the appropriateness of the acknowledgement, the spelling of names and the correctness of titles.

Submitting your module
Deadlines
Editorial deadlines are set to allow time for 'How to' modules to be peer reviewed and edited before their planned publication. Please keep to the deadlines agreed with the commissioning editor so that the production schedule and the quality of the content can both be maintained. If for any reason you are unable to meet the agreed deadline, please inform the commissioning editor as soon as possible.

Preparing your module
Modules must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents with double-spaced lines, single returns at the ends of paragraphs, margins of 1.5 inches and numbered pages. Please remember to keep a copy for your records.

Boxes and tables should be submitted as editable text, not as images embedded in Word documents. Boxes, tables and figures must be inserted in a separate section at the end of the module after the references. If a table or figure is very large, it can be supplied as a separate document. If a figure has been created in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), it should be supplied in its original format. Other figures need to be supplied in one of the following formats: EPS, PDF, TIFF or JPEG.

Please ensure that figures, including photographs, are emailed as attachments at the largest size available (the more megapixels the better). Please do not embed photographs in Word documents as this may reduce the size and quality of the file. Your smartphone or computer may give you the option to choose the file size to send. If so, always select 'large' or 'original'. If you are not given this option, the file will most likely be sent at the largest size available. Please do not make the file smaller than it is, since this often makes it unusable.

Peer review

When we receive your module, it will be assessed internally before being sent simultaneously to two external experts for peer review. Once their comments have been received, you will be contacted by a member of the RCNi Learning team with a response. This will be either provisional acceptance without revision, a request for revision or a letter explaining that your module has been declined.

Copyright

If your module is provisionally accepted, you will be asked to complete an author form and sign a publisher's agreement, which assigns copyright of your module to RCNi. Modules will not be published without a signed publisher's agreement from each author.

RCN accreditation

If your module is provisionally accepted, it will be sent to the RCN for accreditation, which may require it to be amended.

Publication

Before publication you will be provided with access to the RCNi Learning testing site to review your module. Your module will then be published online on **rcnilearning.com**

Module review

Every two years you will be asked to review your 'How to' module for re-accreditation by the RCN. This ensures the module continues to meet benchmark educational standards. You will be provided with access to the RCNi Learning site to review your module and provide any updates needed.
To ensure your module is up to date and relevant to practice on an ongoing basis, you should regularly consider whether:

» There are any new guidelines that affect the content.
» There are any new publications that affect the content.
» All books used are the latest editions.
» Nursing practice or roles have changed and need updating.
» All weblinks are up to date and still working.

If you think any changes are needed before the next planned module review, please contact the RCNi Learning team.

Fee

An honorarium of £100 is payable following publication of a 'How to' module.

Contacts

Questions regarding submitting 'How to' modules, and the modules themselves once finalised, should be sent to senior nurse editor Dr Richard Hatchett (**richard.hatchett@rcni.com),** RCNi Learning editor Yvonne Byron Nour (**yvonne.byronnour@rcni.com)** or RCNi CPD editor Nick Lipley (**nick.lipley@rcni.com**).