

Guidance for Reviewing a BJSM Paper

Questions to ask yourself before starting:

- Is the paper within my field of expertise and scope of knowledge and experience?
- Do I have a conflict of interest (personal, institutional, financial, or other)?
- Do I have the time to complete the review in the requested window, or with a short extension? (It is usually reasonable to ask for a 2–3-week extension).

Conduct a **first read-through**.

Under “**Comments to Editor**” summarise your impressions and mention any confidential information that is not for the authors’ attention. If you have major concerns about the article, please state them here. It is also helpful if you comment on whether you believe this paper is a good fit and meets the standards for a BJSM publication. Remember, these comments are extremely valuable to the editors in their decision making.

Under “**Comments to the authors**” start with some short “**General Comments**” that cover:

- Thanking the authors for the time and effort taken to prepare the manuscript
- **An introduction**
 - Your understanding of the central question and key messages
 - Some positive comments about what has been done well
- What gap (if any) in the literature the paper fills
- Originality of the work
- Manuscript flow and writing style
- Quality of the graphs and figures
- Length of the abstract and paper (compare this to the journal’s [“Author Guidelines”](#) for the specific format)
- Ethical considerations

Note – reviewers should not comment to the authors if they believe the paper should be accepted or rejected. This information should be placed in the “Comments to the Editor” and the appropriate box checked at the end of the review where there is an option to recommend “reject”..

While doing a detailed reading of the manuscript, you may wish to mark-up / track changes on the original document and attach this to your submission; it’s important to also transfer your comments to ScholarOne under “Specific Comments”

If there is an area that you feel you need assistance with e.g., statistical interpretation, mention that to the editor

Don’t spend time on spelling or grammar corrections, but feel free to comment if these need addressing.

Conduct a **second read-through** focusing on detail before adding “**Specific Comments.**” It is helpful if the page number and line number are stated followed by your comment, question, or suggestion.

The following areas should be considered in your review (not all areas need to be addressed in your comments to the authors unless there is a specific suggestion/concern):

Title

- Is it succinct yet still describes the content of the paper?

Abstract

- Does it adequately summarise the key findings of the manuscript?
- Is the aim of the study clearly stated?
- Are the following aspects covered?
 - Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Conclusion
- Does the abstract accurately reflect the body of the manuscript or are there discrepancies or inadequacies?
- Are conclusions appropriate and supported by the data presented?

Introduction

- Is the purpose of the study and the hypothesis being tested clearly described?
- Does the aim/purpose match that stated in the abstract?
- Is the originality of the research explained by demonstrating the need for investigations in the topic area?
- Does it provide a succinct review of recent relevant research?
- Are the gaps in current understanding highlighted?
- Are all important terms adequately defined?
- Is it concise (2-3 paragraphs)?

Materials and Methods

- Is the study type described and accurate?
- Are the Informed Consent and Ethical Approval processes described?
- Are the following mentioned
 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria, primary and secondary outcomes, independent and dependent variables, statistical analysis employed?
- Are the methods described adequate to address the hypothesis?
- Are the methods detailed enough to allow for replication of the study?
- Have standard guidelines been followed e.g., [CONSORT statement](#) for RCTs, [AGREE reporting checklist and GRADE criteria](#) for clinical practice guidelines, [PRISMA statement](#) for systematic and scoping reviews?

- For expert panel consensus statements, is the panel selection process and methodology to reach consensus clearly detailed?
- What was done to minimise risk of bias?

Statistical Analysis

- We recommend using the **CHAMP checklist** (will link) for statistical analysis of medical papers.
- Do you feel you can adequately assess the statistics used? If not, please ask for additional statistical review (in the confidential comments to the editor)

Results

- What was newly discovered or confirmed?
- Are the results clearly presented and explained?
- Are they accurately interpreted?
- Please use the [CHAMP checklist](#) to ensure presentation of results (including statistical significance, confidence intervals etc.) is appropriate for the study design and analysis performed.

Tables and Figures

- Are the tables, graphs and figures clear and easy to interpret?
- Are the titles, labels, statistical notation or image quality clear?
- Do they add to the manuscript or merely repeat what is in the text?
- Are there sufficient data and data points and are they consistent with the conclusions?

Citations Check

- Check that cited articles central to the authors' arguments are accurately supported by the cited reference by cross-checking the reference

Discussion

- Are the findings clearly stated?
- Is the novelty of the research highlighted?
- Are the conclusions evidence-based?
- Are the findings contextualised in terms of the current literature?
- How are discrepancies in the findings explained?
- Are both the strengths and the weaknesses of the study described?
- Are the clinical/real world implications of the research presented?
- Is a 'limitations' section present?
- Are the findings overstated?
- Is it written in a concise and clear manner?

References

- Are the references formatted according to the [journal guidelines](#)?
- Are there too many references for the article type?
- Have key references been omitted?
- Are important references adequately cited in the text?

Submitting Your Review and Recommendation:

BJSM ScholarOne Submitted Review

Having completed the above, you will be able to accurately complete the ScholarOne sections under “Submitted Review”. These include:

- Do all figures include the actual data for all data points shown, either within/beside the figure or in the supplementary material?
- Please provide a competing interest statement:
- Are research ethics (e.g. study design, consent, ethical approval) addressed appropriately?
- Do you have any concerns about publication ethics (e.g., plagiarism, fabrication, redundant publication, undeclared conflicts of interest)?
- Supplementary material
 - Is it appropriate for publication and clearly presented?
 - Is there any additional information that should be included in the supplementary material for publication?
- If you feel the paper needs an English language review, please let the editor know in the confidential comments to the editor section.
- If asking for a revision, be specific about what changes you would like to see
- If rejecting the paper, make constructive suggestions about how the paper can be improved

Attach files if you prepared your comments in a separate document or edited directly such as your tracked changes Word manuscript.

Link your ORCID ID to your review. BMJ is working with [ORCID](#) to recognise the importance of the reviewer community. Reviewers are now able to share their activity by connecting their review to their ORCID account to gain recognition for their contributions.

Sources

1. BJSM/BMJ Authors. <https://bjsm.bmj.com/pages/authors/>
2. How to peer review.
<https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html>
3. Tandon R. How to review a scientific paper. *Asian J of Psych* 2014; 11: 124-127.
4. Mansournia MA, Collins GS, Nielsen RO, *et al.* Checklist for statistical Assessment of Medical Papers: the CHAMP statement. *Br J Sports Med*.
doi: [10.1136/bjsports-2020-103651](https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2020-103651) Published Online First: 29 January 2021.
5. Altman DG and Royston P. The cost of dichotomising continuous variables. *BMJ* 2006;332:1080. doi: [10.1136/bmj.332.7549.1080](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.332.7549.1080)