

Research Matters magazine

Guide for contributors and reviewers

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1. Background

Research Matters is the SRA's quarterly magazine which our 1250+ members receive free of charge. Back issues are on the [SRA website](#).

Our members are very diverse in terms of methodological and policy area expertise and interests, and work in different sectors, including: central and local government and government agencies (30%); students (14%), academia (7%); research agencies and institutes (16%); freelance researchers (11%); voluntary and non-government organisations (11%); and, others (11%)

We welcome contributions from SRA members and non-members. If you are contributing an article, please use the [template for articles](#) on the SRA website. The template has a space for your contact email address and phone number. **Please give us these, in case we need to contact you about your article.**

All contributions are reviewed by the editorial team and you may be asked to revise your article in line with their comments. Contributions we accept may be edited to ensure coherence within the publication and to meet our guidelines.

2. The basics

Length of article/word count

We prefer to have one article per page without running on to other pages.

A full-page article is no more than 670 words.

A half-page article is no more than 330 words.

Please be aware that if your article is longer, we will need to trim it to fit.

This word count includes any footnotes and references and it also allows for your author pic (see below).

If you supply another image such as a table or a graph, you should reduce the word count by around 80-100 words. This is an approximate estimate and if you want something more precise please ask us and we can check with the designer.

Please do not add internal hyperlinks to your article (but see also references and citations below). This is because people sometimes print off SRA RM and so internal hyperlinks are not useable. Supply the URL in full in brackets.

The word count varies slightly depending on the format we use. We produce the March, June and September issues as PDFs in landscape format. We produce the December issue in portrait format as a hard copy (print) version as well as a PDF.

Headings

Please supply about 4 or 5 headings to break up your text.

Images

We like photos and other images.

We ask for an author photo to go with each article. Please supply this when you submit your article. (Check [back issues](#) to see how these appear.)

Images should be in digital file format (jpeg, png or similar), and of good resolution. Please don't send in photos from websites as these won't be of high enough quality.

Any images have to be legible. If you are not sure whether an image is usable please check with us. We like graphics that replace or add something to text.

Author details

Please use the [article template](#) to ensure we have your details such as job title and organisation/ institution – we put this beside the article.

Title for article

Do give a short title for your article. But if you can't think of one, we'll supply it.

Further information

Please give an email or web address so that readers can find out more about the topic of the article / your organisation.

References and citations

We discourage excessive references to other published work.

In your text, please cite by surname and year, as in these examples: (Jones, 2012) or (Smith et al, 2012). Please use 'et al' if there is more than one author.

At the end of your article, please list the books and journals cited in your article. You should only include references that are cited in your text.

Please do not use the 'footnotes' or 'endnotes' options in your word-processing program (eg Word). Just make a list at the end of the references you have cited. The list should be in alphabetical order by (first) surname.

References to books and reports: Surname, N., Surname, N., and Surname, N. (year of publication) Title of book. Where published: Publishing organisation. Example: Knight, P. (2004) Reducing uncertainty. York: Higher Education Academy.

References to journal articles: Surname, N., Surname, N., and Surname, N. (year of publication) 'Title of article'. Title of journal Issue/n: pagination. Example: Ettelt, S., Mays, N. and Allen, P. (2015a) 'The multiple purposes of policy piloting and their consequences: three examples from national health and social care policy in England'. Journal of Social Policy 44 (2): 319-337.

In the 'References' section you can add weblinks to the books and articles listed, but please link to a webpage featuring a document, rather than directly to an open PDF online. Links which fail after publication cannot be updated. Start at 'www' (not 'http//') unless there is no 'www'. Links should follow the reference, in brackets. Please test links before you send us the article.

Links in the text: when referencing a book, report or journal article, do not add a hyperlink to it in the main text (only do this in the 'References' section, see above). But if your article references an item on the web which is not published in a book or journal, add a weblink in brackets after the text, for example 'in her blog post'

(weblink). Start at 'www' (not 'http//' unless there is no 'www'). Please test links before you send us the article. Links which fail after publication cannot be updated.

Please do not add any internal hyperlinks to other parts of your article or references.

Put any acknowledgements in a separate section at the very end of the article.

3. Guidance for reviewers

We ask reviewers to consider the following aspects:

Acceptance issues/need for revision

- Is the subject matter broadly relevant to the readership?
- Will readers with an interest in this area learn something useful, and/or new?
- Is the article coherent, following a logical sequence?
- If research/methodology issues are controversial/hotly debated, does the article acknowledge this?
- Is it too long or too short?

Editing issues

- Are there terms which may be unfamiliar to non-specialists, which need explaining?
- Are there unfamiliar acronyms which need to be given in full?
- Are there hard-to-follow or over-long sentences which can be reshaped/shortened without losing meaning?
- Is there repetition?

4. Detailed style guide

This is guidance not rules – just aim for consistency and clarity!

These are the conventions we use. It helps if you follow them. We've taken these from a combination of The Guardian style guide, The Economist style guide and the Oxford Style Guide. We also refer to the Oxford Dictionary. Decisions are often about preference and general readability rather than absolute 'right' or 'wrong'!

Italics

Avoid italics in main text. Use 'single quotation marks' if referring to a document.

Underlines

Use bold, not underlines for emphasis.

Organisations

Organisations are singular, for example: 'the SRA has published a style guide'.

Gender neutral

It is fine to use 'they' and 'them' to refer to a singular: prefer 'they' to 'him or her'. Prefer gender neutral titles eg 'chair' to 'chairman'.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Spell out acronyms at first mention unless they are well known eg SRA, UK, MP and so on. The first time you use an abbreviation or acronym, explain it in full, and then refer to it by initials, for example the Social Research Association (SRA). Don't use an acronym if you are not going to use it again later in the text.

Country

Prefer UK to Britain. If not the whole UK, specify the country (countries) eg 'England'.

Ampersand

Use 'and' rather than '&'.

Bullet points

Bullet points make text easier to read. Make sure that:

- You always use a lead-in line
- The bullets make sense running on from the lead-in line
- You use upper case at the start of the bullet
- You don't use full stops within bullet points – where possible start another bullet point or use commas, dashes or semicolons to expand on an item
- You don't put 'or', 'and' after the bullets
- There is no full stop after the last bullet point

Quotes

Use single inverted commas (').

Capitals

Keep capitals to a minimum; it is easier for readability and it's much less pompous! We use lower case for job titles.

Numbers

- Spell out one to ten
- Use numerals for 11 and above
- Use 1 and 2 rather than 1st and 2nd at dates
- Use % rather than per cent

Dates and times

Use 'to' in date and time range, for example:

- Tax year 2011 to 2012
- Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- 10 November to 21 December
- When space is an issue, for example tables, you can use abbreviations at: Jan, Feb, Mar, Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec
- 5.30pm (not 17:30hrs); 9am not 09.00
- Midnight, not 00:00
- Midday, not 12 noon, noon or 12pm
- 10am to 11am (not 10–11am)

Web

- Email (no hyphen) and all lower case
- Start URLs at www (not http:// unless no www)
- Lower case for 'internet'

Vocabulary and spelling

- We prefer plain words e.g. 'use' rather than 'utilise'
- We are not very keen on jargon such as 'access' (verb); 'going forward' 'delivering' (as in 'delivering on outcomes') but we won't (usually) re-write these if you use them
- We use 's' rather than 'z', for example visualise
- We use 'judgement' rather than 'judgment'
- We use 'adviser' rather than 'advisor'
- We use 'focused' rather than 'focussed'
- We tend to use a singular verb with 'data', like 'agenda', although strictly speaking it is a plural
- We prefer to use 'behaviour' in the singular; although we accept that it is sometimes a countable noun