

# Plain Language Summary Tool

## TRAINING MANUAL FOR THE PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY TOOL

The Plain Language Summary Tool was developed in collaboration between the University of Washington Center for Technology and Disability Studies (UWCTDS) and SEDL's Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (KTDRR). Copyright © 2013-2014 SEDL.

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# WHAT IS "PLAIN LANGUAGE?"

**Plain language** has been defined as:

*"The writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding the document at the first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood" (Steinberg, 1991, p. 3)†.*

Plain language is first and foremost "good" writing. Specifically, it is:

- Written with the intent of communicating to a specific audience,
- Uses straightforward grammatical structure,
- Uses accurate terminology (but not jargon),
- Conversational.
  - Active voice
  - First person
- Carefully formatted,
  - Adequate white space
  - Smaller chunks of text
  - Clear headers and organizational structure
  - Important information highlighted
- Readable by a wide audience,
  - 8th grade reading level is often the goal, but be careful with readability formulas.
- A form of continual process improvement in which you:
  - Draft with audience in mind
  - Check for content accuracy through expert review
  - Check for understandability through interviews with readers
  - Iteratively rewrite

Plain language is not simplified or "dumbed down" content. It is language that is simple and clear while retaining accuracy.

Plain language benefits authors and readers because:

- It is efficient (readers don't have to work hard to understand),
- More people understand the message and fewer people misunderstand, and therefore,
- People can respond to what they read with less support from authors.

In health fields, the use of plain language can reduce the negative effects of low health literacy. A majority of Americans have difficulty understanding complex medical information and vulnerable populations may have the lowest health literacy, so providing clear, accurate information is critical.

†Steinberg, E. R. (1991). Plain language: principles and practice. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY TOOL?

This web-based tool guides authors through the process of writing a plain language summary of a systematic review. The tool is organized using the New Standards for Plain Language Summaries developed by the Cochrane Plain Language Expectations for Authors of Cochrane Summaries (PLEACS) working group (<http://consumers.cochrane.org/PLEACS>). It also supports collaboration across geographically distributed teams.

# GETTING STARTED

Register and log in at <https://ktdrr.org/resources/plst> using your email address and password. If you forget your password, you may recreate it by selecting the **Forgot Password** option.

**Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)**

Home

**Welcome.**

The Plain Language Summary Tool guides users through the process of creating Cochrane style plain language summaries of systematic reviews. Users can start, save, and edit summaries until they are satisfied. They may then share the completed summary with other collaborators.

**Please Log On**

Please login with your email address and password.

**User ID:**

**Password:**

**First time?**  
[Register for a free account.](#)

**Forgot password?**  
The [forgot password](#) page can help you log on.

Watch on YouTube

[Watch video on YouTube site](#)

If you are registering for a new account, the registration page will prompt you to enter the sum of two numbers to verify that you are not a robot. You will then receive an email with a link to access the Plain Language Summary Tool.

# Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)

Home

## Registration

All fields are required.

Email Address

First Name

Last Name

Institution

Verification (to prevent automated submissions)

Please enter the sum of 2 and 5:

For technical assistance, please contact [blitke@air.org](mailto:blitke@air.org).

The Plain Language Summary Tool was developed in collaboration between the University of Washington Center for Technology and Disability Studies (UWCTDS) and AIR's [Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research](#) (KTDRR). Copyright © 2013-2021 [American Institutes for Research](#) (AIR).

The contents of this site were developed under grant number H133A120012 from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Community Living (ACL). However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.

When you first access the site, select **Change Password** at the top of the home page to set your password.

# HOME PAGE

You will be taken to the Home Page where you can **Create a New Plain Language (PL) Summary**, visit **Saved PL Summaries** or learn more about the Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST). You can also **Log out** of the PLST or **Change your Password**.

Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)

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Home

Create New PL Summary

Saved PL Summaries (6)

Watch Getting Started Video

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- What is "Plain Language?"
- What is the purpose of this tool?
- Whom is this tool for?
- Plain language resources
- How do I use the tool?
- Plain language summary examples
- Who developed the tool?
- How do I cite the tool?

To learn more about the PLST or writing plain language, click on one of the gray buttons in the main section of the page. The section will “accordion” down to show more information. Clicking again will close the accordion.

Create New PL Summary

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- What is the purpose of this tool?
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# CREATE NEW PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Click the **Create New Summary** button to begin the process of writing a plain language summary. This link takes you to a page that shows the sections of the plain language summary in the left column along with the choice to **Save** at the bottom of the page.

To begin a summary, first enter the citation of the review. You can enter this manually, or you can enter the PubMed ID and have the tool generate the citation automatically. Currently, the **Get From PubMed** feature only works with articles that are classified as Journal Articles or Reviews in PubMed.

## Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)

[Home](#) [Logout Brian Litke](#) [Change Password](#)

- Citation
- Plain Language Title
- Question
- Background
- Search Date
- Characteristics
- Funding
- Results
- Statistics
- Quality

[Print/Share this Summary](#)

### Plain Language Summary: Step 1 of 10 (Citation)

PubMed ID  [Get From PubMed](#) [What is this?](#)

**Title \* (Required)**

Example: Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the PROMIS pain quality item bank

**Authors \* (Required)**

Example: Revicki DA, Cook KF, Amtmann D, Harnam N, Chen WH, Keefe FJ

**Publication Year \* (Required)**

Example: 2021

**Journal Title**

Example: British journal of pharmacology

**Volume**  **Issue**  **Page**

Example: 168 Example: 7 Example: 1558-69

[Save](#)

If you use the autofill feature, it will add all required fields. If you enter

manually, you are required to enter a Title, Author(s) and Publication Year in order to continue.

**Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)**

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**Plain Language Summary: Step 1 of 10 (Citation)**

PubMed ID

**Title \* (Required)**

Is physical rehabilitation for older people in long-term care effective? Findings from a systematic review.

**Authors \* (Required)**

Forster A, Lambley R, Young JB

**Publication Year \* (Required)**

**Journal Title**

**Volume**      **Issue**      **Page**

Print/Share this Summary

- Citation
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After you have entered all the required information, click the **Save** button and then choose the next tab down in the left navigation: **Plain Language Title**.

On this page, and each of the remaining content pages, you will find a place to add information and a Standard and Rationale that explains the purpose of the section.

Once you fill in your text, you can **Save** and then move between sections by selecting sections in the left side navigation. You do not need to complete the forms in order, and you can save and return to the draft to complete it later.

Note that every time you select **Save**, the application saves your draft. **Save** frequently to avoid losing your work in case of a computer failure.

**Plain Language Summary Tool (PLST)**

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Citation ✓  
Plain Language Title ✗  
Question ✗  
Background ✗  
Search Date ✗  
Characteristics ✗  
Funding ✗  
Results ✗  
Statistics ✗  
Quality ✗

Print/Share this Summary

### Plain Language Summary: Step 2 of 10 (Plain Language Title)

Forster A, Lambley R, Young JB (2010). Is physical rehabilitation for older people in long-term care effective? Findings from a systematic review. *Age and ageing*. 39(2):169-75 [View in PubMed](#)

**Plain Language Title (Required by Cochrane)**

Rich text editor toolbar: Bold, Italic, Underline, Bulleted List, Numbered List, Link, Unlink, Undo, Redo, Paragraph, Indent, Outdent, Source Code.

0 WORDS POWERED BY TINY

**Save**

#### Description of Cochrane Standard for Plain Language Summaries

Restate the title of the review or the review question.

#### Rationale and Elaboration for Use of this Standard

The title should be given in plain language. Difficult language includes technical words, jargon or words that are long or with many syllables. If a plain language alternative is not available, include an explanation of the term in the title. Avoid declarative statements and recommendations.

A new button appears in the left navigation once you begin your plain language summary. **Print/Share this Summary** allows you to generate sharable and printable versions of the plain language summary.

After you select **Print/Share this Summary**, you will be taken to a page that shows the compiled version of your plain language summary. You may print this page to a PDF file or copy the URL at the top of the page and send it to a collaborator. Your collaborator does not need an account in the Plain Language Summary Tool to be able to see the draft.

# Plain Language Summary Draft

[What can I do with this?](#)

Summary by: Steven Boydston, AIR

Naylor K, Kingsnorth S, Lamont A, McKeever P, Macarthur C (2011). The effectiveness of music in pediatric healthcare: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. 2011():1-18

## Plain Language Title

The effectiveness of music in healthcare for children and youth.

## Review Question

Does music therapy impact health-related outcomes for children and youth within a variety of conditions and settings?

## Background

Music therapy is defined as the use of music or musical elements to achieve the best possible health outcomes for a client or group of clients. This includes passive listening to prerecorded music or active music making.

Six meta-analyses on the use of music in healthcare for children and youth have been published. Two of these reviews focused on the effectiveness of music on reducing short-lived pain from medical procedures and treatments. Three other reviews focused on specific populations including children and adolescents with behavioral, emotional, and/or developmental disorders, children with autism, and nonverbal children with autism.

While previous findings support the effectiveness of music therapy their focus was narrow, this paper will not focus on specific populations or outcomes.

## Search Date

The search date was on March 4, 2009 and included studies from 1984 to 2009.

## Study Characteristics

There were 2411 titles that were identified with 17 studies meeting the inclusion criteria.

Selected studies included a total of 575 participants; approximately half were male. Sample sizes ranged from 8 to 134 participants. All but one of the trials focused on elementary school age children, adolescents, or a combination. Recruitment settings included the community, hospital inpatient units, outpatient clinics, schools, and residential educational and psychiatric facilities.

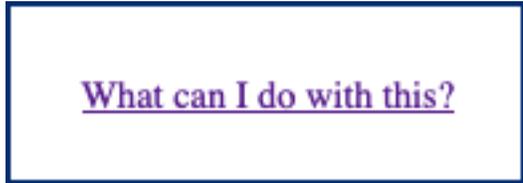
## Study Funding Sources

No funding was received for this project.

## Key Results

# SHARING YOUR PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

In the top right corner, you will see a link, “What can I do with this?” When you click the link, a window appears with instructions for the different ways you can share your plain language summary.



- Use the website sharing buttons on the right side of the page to quickly share the resource on Twitter, Facebook, or by email.
- Share the URL to your Plain Language Summary. Viewers do not need a logon to see your Plain Language Summary.
- Print the page to a PDF file for sharing.

### How to Share Drafts ✕

The shareable, read-only view on this screen is intended to provide a convenient way to share your work with peer reviewers, colleagues, collaborators, or just to provide quick access for your own review.

This page may be viewed by anyone with the keyed URL, whether or not they are logged in or even registered as a Plain Language Summary Tool user.

#### Sharing via AddThis

The AddThis toolbar is visible on the right-hand side of this page and allows you to share this URL of your draft with a variety of social and peer networks, or with an email recipient. Simply click one of the icons in the toolbar to get started. The "+" button will provide a panel of additional share destinations.

#### Sharing via URL

The following URL (also visible in your browser's address bar) is a convenient way to reach this view of this particular summary:

**<https://ktdrr.org/resources/plst/tool/view-plain-language-summary.php?k=vcf2mt6tjjern>**

You may copy/paste the above URL into an email message and address it to your colleagues, or you may bookmark/favorite this page in your browser for your own use.

#### Printing

This view has been specially formatted to produce readable and printable output using your browser's native print dialog. This is often located on the File menu, or by pressing CTRL+P. This instructional dialog should be closed prior to printing.

# YOUR SAVED PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARIES

On the home page, the button **Saved PL Summaries** allows you to see a list of all the PL Summaries you have entered, their completion status, a link to share the PL Summary, and an option to delete the PL Summary.

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### My Plain Language Summaries

You have 3 Plain Language Summaries on file. Create a New Plain Language Summary

Shareable Link	Authors	Title <i>(click to edit record)</i>	Year	Journal	Date Modified	Delete
<a href="#">link</a>	Forster A, Lambley R, Young JB	<a href="#">Is physical rehabilitation for older people in long-term care effective? Findings from a systematic review.</a>	2010	Age and ageing	2021-11-01 19:22:55 ❌ data incomplete	<input type="checkbox"/> confirm deletion <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete PLS</span>
<a href="#">link</a>	Sloane NH	<a href="#">alpha-Naphthoflavone activation of 6-hydroxymethylbenzo(alpha)pyrene synthetase.</a>	1975	Cancer research	2021-08-26 14:29:28 ❌ data incomplete	<input type="checkbox"/> confirm deletion <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete PLS</span>
<a href="#">link</a>	Kempfle MA, Müller RF, Winkler HA	<a href="#">Relaxation kinetic studies of coenzyme binding to glutamate dehydrogenase from beef liver.</a>	1978	Biochemical and biophysical research communications	2021-05-26 12:49:05 ✅ data complete	<input type="checkbox"/> confirm deletion <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete PLS</span>