

Healthy Eating Research (HER) Writing Guidance

General Language and Style

HER research briefs are written in a different style than academic journal articles. They aim to present the evidence in a way that is easily understandable to decision makers (e.g., policy-makers), advocates, and health professionals. Find examples [on our website](#).

Inclusive, Equity-Centered Language

How we talk about public health, people, and our work matters. Inclusive language with a health equity lens considers systemic and structural inequities, conveys respect to all people, acknowledges diversity, and is free of stereotypes and subtle discrimination.

Using equity-centered, inclusive language can help researchers avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes or blaming people for their own life circumstances or health status, particularly when reporting on health disparities.

Key principles include:

- Use people-first language
- Use gender-neutral language
- Ask first and allow people to self-identify (this is relevant for race, gender identity, etc.)
- Ensure that writing is free from bias, stereotypes, and cultural assumptions

Consider using these guides in your study materials, job descriptions, and as you are communicating and disseminating your research findings:

- CDC's [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#) are designed for public health professionals. This resource emphasizes the importance of addressing all people inclusively and respectfully.
- The [Sum of Us Progressive's Style Guide](#) contains writing guides and additional resources for a variety of issue areas, including age, health, disability, gender/sex, and race/ethnicity.
- The [Language of Health Guide](#) has strategies to use and avoid when communicating to the public about health, nutrition, and weight.
- Your institution's office of diversity and inclusion may have additional helpful resources.

Citation Style

HER uses [AMA style](#) for references. Here are basic guidelines and a sample citation format.

- In the text, indicate a reference with superscript numerals that correspond to a numbered listing of references at the end of the publication.
- Within the reference list itself, number citations with regular (not superscript) numerals.
- If the text refers to the same citation more than once, repeat the superscript numeral in the text.
- When citing multiple references in the text, use hyphens to join numerals in a series (4-6). Use commas without spaces to separate multiple citations (2,4,8).
- In the reference list, use the author's surname followed by initials without periods. Give the names of all authors. If there are more than six, only include the first three, followed by "et al."

Journal article format: Author(s). Article title. *Journal Name*. Year;vol(issue No.): inclusive pgs.

Acknowledging HER Funding

Products produced as a result of an HER grant should include this funding acknowledgement:

This *[paper/research]* was supported by a grant (*include grant # if applicable*) from Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Authorship and Acknowledgments

The research team is responsible for identifying who meets authorship criteria. Ideally, this happens when planning the work, but can change as the work progresses. Generally, every listed author should make a substantial contribution to the work, but other criteria may depend on where your work is published.

Authors should decide the order of authors together. Include contributors who do not meet authorship criteria in your acknowledgments.

It is not HER's role to determine who qualifies for authorship or to mediate authorship conflicts.

Disseminating Your Findings

Dissemination of research findings is critical to the success of your research project. We suggest that you begin planning early for the release of your research results. Key components of a dissemination plan include:

- **Identify your goals and audience(s).** What are you trying to achieve (e.g., raise awareness, change practice)? Think about the end user of your findings, how your findings would be useful to these individuals or organizations, and any barriers or facilitators to these audiences using your findings.
- **Identify dissemination partners.** Who can help you reach your target audience? Consider trusted opinion leaders, your professional networks, and professional groups of your target audience.
- **Specify research findings and products.** Select the right product based on your findings, audience, and goals (e.g., research brief, journal article, op-ed, infographic, etc.).
- **Messaging and channels.** Create clear and targeted messages and decide which channels to use based on your product and audiences (e.g., social media, interest group listserv, etc.).

If you are an HER grantee, we have resources to advise you on numerous topics, including but not limited to developing a dissemination plan, developing succinct messages about your research or key findings, and ways to attract positive publicity, including press releases, social media messaging, and other media coverage.

Consider the following resources as you prepare to disseminate your findings.

Resource	Description	Format
Dissemination Strategies for Researchers (RWJF)	This video offers a simple framework and practical steps researchers can take to ensure their work makes it into the hands of people who can use it.	30 minute video
Smart Chart (Spitfire Strategies)	Spitfire Strategies offers a tool called Smart Chart to walk you through six logical steps to create a strategic communications plan.	Online tool
Research Impact (Taylor & Francis Group)	Use this guide to understand what impact means for you and your work, how to measure it, and get tips on sharing your article to increase its impact once it has been published.	Online guide
Media Guide for Health and Science Experts (RWJF)	This guide includes considerations for what makes a good story, tips for preparing basic media materials, questions to answer before you accept and interview and prepare your answers, and specific techniques for different media.	PDF guide
Twitter for Researchers 101 (Policies for Action)	This resource reviews what Twitter is good for, how to get started, common terms, and more.	Slide deck
Guide to Writing for Social Media (CDC)	This guide gives an overview of popular social media channels and tips for writing social media content.	Online guide
Community-Centered Dissemination Toolkit (University of Minnesota)	This toolkit is designed to help research teams incorporate community-engagement principles into dissemination. It can help teams proactively engage communities to communicate research findings in ways that are meaningful and relevant to communities.	Toolkit