

Translating a Publication to a Lay Language Summary

What is a lay language summary?

A lay summary is a description of main points from a publication that can be understood by the lay public, one without vast knowledge of a topic. It focuses on explaining the key points and impact of the results. The summary reduces details and avoids jargon. It can be used to share information to the public or to inform possible participants about the research.

Prepare the Lay Summary

1. Identify the audience
 - Example: potential study participant
2. Read the paper
3. Read the paper again and mark the main points in each section
 - Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion
 - Limit to 1-2 main points from each section

Key Points

- Limit the summary to one paragraph
- Use plain language
 - 7th grade level (ages 12-13)
 - Short sentences (less than 25 words)
 - Simple vocabulary
- Use the active voice (subject is doing the action)
- Explain any acronyms
- Do not use names of tools and software

Write the Lay Summary

Note: Limit to 1-2 sentences in each section

1. Give background
 - Why is it important? Why should people care? What is the purpose?
2. Turn the main points of the introduction into plain language
3. Describe the methods used in the paper
 - If you are looking for participants, they will want to know the steps of the study
4. State the results in the publication
 - Use simple numbers or general trends
5. Explain the main points from the discussion
 - The public will want to know the reasoning behind the results
6. State the impact of the study

Proofread the Lay Summary

1. Proofread the summary
 - Make sentences shorter
 - Change words to more basic vocabulary
2. Ask someone in the same field to review the summary
 - Check for technical accuracy
 - Make edits from the feedback given
3. Ask 3 laypersons (rehabilitation staff, one with a disability, and caretaker of one with a disability) to review the summary
 - Make sure the public can understand the paragraph
 - Make edits from the feedback given
 - Check for technical accuracy

Example

Scientific: “The development of the primary motor pathway for volitional movement, the corticospinal tract (CST), may be impacted after perinatal stroke, resulting in motor impairment.”¹

Lay: A stroke around birth may lead to complications in the function of the brain, spinal cord and influence the ability to move.¹

1. Kowalski, J.L.; Nemanich, S.T.; Nawshin, T.; Chen, M.; Peyton, C.; Zorn, E.; Hickey, M.; Rao, R.; Georgieff, M.; Rudser, K.; Gillick, B. Motor Evoked Potential Biomarkers of Early Atypical Corticospinal Tract Development in Infants with Perinatal Stroke. *J. Clin. Med.* **2019**, *8*,1208.