

# Guidelines for Contributors to *AJOT*

*Note.* The *Guidelines for Contributors* is also available at the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* manuscript processing system website; go to <http://ajot.submit2aota.org> and click on “Instructions for Authors.” These guidelines are published annually in the November/December supplement to the journal; any changes implemented in the interim are published at <http://ajot.aota.org/ss/authors.aspx>.

The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* (*AJOT*) is the official peer-reviewed journal of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). We welcome the submission of manuscripts that are relevant to the study of occupation and the practice of occupational therapy. These include articles on the following topics:

- Incidence and prevalence of client factors and how they relate to participation in occupations (e.g., activity and participation, roles)
- Patterns of occupational engagement in various populations (e.g., how people spend their time)
- Relationship of engagement in occupations to health and development across the lifespan
- Physiological and psychological mechanisms of health conditions and the ability to participate in occupations (basic science studies)
- Interventions that fall within the scope of occupational therapy (clinical trials)
- Health services research relevant to occupational therapy
- Activity and participation, and quality of life
- Health policy research relating to occupational therapy or the facilitation of participation and healthy engagement in occupation
- Pedagogy relating to the education of entry-level or postprofessional occupational therapy students, interprofessional education, or continuing education of health professionals.

Publication goals include the following:

- Effectiveness studies (outcome studies), systematic reviews, and meta-analyses
- Efficiency studies (studies assessing interventions in areas such as patient satisfaction or cost and time efficiency)
- Studies establishing the reliability and validity of occupational therapy instruments
- Studies linking occupational engagement to participation and health
- Studies exploring a currently debated topical or professional issue (*The Issue Is* articles).

*AJOT* will aim to publish a variety of articles to reflect the broad range of occupational therapy. However, the goal is for the majority of publications to be effectiveness and instrument development studies. *AJOT* is no longer accepting manuscripts on methodology studies (e.g., description of clinical trial methods, description of manualization of interventions).

## Clinical Trials

Beginning January 1, 2016, clinical trials that are the subject of manuscripts submitted to *AJOT* must be registered with ClinicalTrials.gov (or, for non-U.S. researchers, a similar public clinical trials registry). *AJOT* uses the ClinicalTrials.gov (n.d.) definition of *clinical trial*:

A research study using human subjects to evaluate biomedical or health-related outcomes. Two types of clinical studies are interventional studies (or clinical trials) and observational studies.

- An *interventional study* is a clinical study in which participants are assigned to receive one or more interventions (or no intervention) so that researchers can evaluate the effects of the interventions on biomedical or health-related outcomes. The assignments are determined by the study protocol. Participants may receive diagnostic, therapeutic, or other types of interventions.
- An *observational study* is a clinical study in which participants identified as belonging to study groups are assessed for biomedical or health outcomes. Participants may receive diagnostic, therapeutic, or other types of interventions, but the investigator does not assign participants to specific interventions (as in an interventional study). (italics added)

All trials commencing participant recruitment on or after January 1, 2016, should be registered prospectively (i.e., before recruiting participants). Trials that started or finished recruitment before January 1, 2016, but are the subject of manuscripts submitted on or after that date must be retrospectively registered. The trial registration website address and trial registration number must be included in the final, unmasked manuscript in the Acknowledgments section. Trials that evaluate the effects, efficacy, or effectiveness of educational methodologies and techniques for occupational therapy practitioners or for continuing education and that do not have client health as outcomes do not need to be registered.

## Editorial Style

*AJOT* uses the **6th edition** of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010) as the style guide. Consult this manual for style questions unless specified otherwise in these guidelines.

To submit manuscripts, go to <http://ajot.submit2aota.org> and follow the online instructions. Manuscripts must be submitted with the authors' explicit written assurance that the manuscript is not simultaneously under consideration by any other publication. The journal cannot assume responsibility for the loss of manuscripts.

## Authors' Responsibilities

**Signatures.** Before publication of any accepted manuscript, **all authors** must provide original signatures for the statement of authorship responsibility, the statement of financial disclosure, and the statement of copyright release. The Copyright Transfer/Author Certification/Financial Disclosure Form may be downloaded from the *AJOT* submission website. Signed forms must be submitted upon acceptance of a manuscript for publication.

The statement of authorship responsibility is certification that each author has made substantial contributions to (1) the study conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; (2) the drafting and revision of the article; and (3) the approval of the final version. Moreover, each author takes public responsibility for the work.

**Author order.** The order of authors in the byline follows APA guidelines. The principal contributor appears first, and subsequent names are in order of decreasing contribution. Authors are encouraged to limit the number of coauthors to six or fewer.

## Types of Articles

**Feature-length research article.** Feature-length research articles include (1) original research reports that focus on philosophical, theoretical, educational, occupation science, or practice topics and (2) critical reviews (including meta-analyses) that offer systematic review and critical analysis of a body of literature as related to occupation and occupational therapy. Unless the manuscript is unique to occupational therapy practice or education, manuscripts should be written to the topic rather than occupational therapy's importance in the area (e.g., writing about the importance of sleep hygiene to quality of sleep and function throughout the day, rather than occupational therapy's unique role in sleep hygiene).

Feature-length articles should include a section summarizing the implications of the research for occupational therapy practice or general interprofessional clinical practice; this section should include a bulleted list of the key points. Please see the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010) for all headings to be used in a research paper. For intervention effectiveness studies, please also see "Reporting Standards for Intervention Effectiveness Studies" (Gutman, 2010) at [http://ajot.submit2aota.org/journals/ajot/forms/AJOT\\_Reportin\\_Standards.pdf](http://ajot.submit2aota.org/journals/ajot/forms/AJOT_Reportin_Standards.pdf) and "Information Commonly Unreported in Intervention Effectiveness Studies" (Gutman & Murphy, 2012) at <http://ajot.aotapress.net/content/66/1/7.full.pdf>. (22 pages maximum, or 4,000 words, including title page, abstract, acknowledgments, references, tables, figures, and illustrations)

Authors of systematic and scoping reviews are encouraged to adhere to the page and word count limits for feature-length articles; the accompanying tables will be published online and are not included in those limits. Review articles covering an exceptionally extensive body of research may be as long as 26 pages, or 5,000 words. Because guidelines have not been established for scoping reviews, such reviews should follow the PRISMA guidelines.

To increase the transparency of clinical research and improve the ability to evaluate published articles for methodo-

logical and analytical rigor, *AJOT* has adopted reporting standards based on the COnsolidated Standards Of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) Statement (Moher, Schulz, & Altman, 2001; see <http://www.consort-statement.org>) and APA guidelines (APA Publications and Communications Board Working Group on Journal Article Reporting Standards, 2008). In addition, *AJOT* is participating with several other major rehabilitation and disability journals in a collaborative initiative to enhance clinical research reporting standards through adoption of the EQUATOR Network reporting guidelines (see Chan, Heinemann, & Roberts, 2014), such as the following:

- CAse REports (CARE; Gagnier et al., 2014), for case reports (<http://www.care-statement.org/>)
- COnsolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research (COREQ; Tong, Sainsbury, & Graig, 2007), for qualitative studies (<http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/coreq/>)
- Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009), for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (<http://www.prisma-statement.org/>)
- Strengthening the Reporting of OBservational studies in Epidemiology (STROBE; von Elm et al., 2007), for observational studies (<http://strobe-statement.org/>)
- STAndards for the Reporting of Diagnostic accuracy studies (STARD; Bossuyt et al., 2003), for studies of diagnostic accuracy (<http://www.stard-statement.org/>).

Authors are required to use appropriate guidelines in the preparation of manuscripts submitted to *AJOT*, and reviewers refer to the guidelines in evaluating all *AJOT* submissions.

**Brief Report.** A *Brief Report* is a short report of original research that is of a pilot or exploratory nature or that addresses a discrete research question and lacks broad implications. (15 pages maximum, or 3,000 words, including title page, abstract, acknowledgments, references, tables, figures, and illustrations)

**Case Report.** A *Case Report* is a short report of original work that focuses on a case example of a clinical situation using baseline and outcome measures. The focus can be on a patient or client, a family, an institution, or any other defined unit. The case should represent unique elements of practice that are not already represented in the literature. (15 pages maximum, or 3,000 words, including title page, abstract, acknowledgments, references, tables, figures, and illustrations)

**The Issue Is.** *The Issue Is* articles address timely issues, policies, or professional trends or express opinions supported by cogent argument from the literature. They provide a forum for scholars to debate professional issues that have an impact on the evolution of the profession. *The Issue Is* papers have three primary sections: (1) background information about the problem in question as it relates to the profession and to the larger society, (2) logically presented arguments supporting the authors' position, and (3) the steps the profession must take to promote positive change. Limited space is allocated to *The Issue Is* articles, and otherwise acceptable manuscripts may be rejected if they cannot be published within a reasonable time frame. (15 pages maximum, or 3,000 words, including title page, abstract, acknowledgments, references, tables, figures, and illustrations)

Manuscripts for all categories are peer reviewed.

*Note.* Consistent with the *Guidelines for Supervision, Roles, and Responsibilities During the Delivery of Occupational Therapy Services* (AOTA, 2014b), the roles of the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant shall be considered, and when appropriate, role distinctions shall be clarified.

## Manuscript Preparation

For format and reference style, consult the APA style manual and recent issues of *AJOT*. Careful attention to style details will expedite the peer review process.

Authors are responsible for ensuring that a blind review process can take place by submitting a **masked** version of the manuscript, which contains no identifying information, including names and affiliations of all authors and acknowledgments. Unmasked articles will be returned for masking before they are reviewed. Authors of manuscripts that are accepted will be asked to provide an unmasked version.

Double-space the entire manuscript, including abstract, text, quotations, acknowledgments, tables, figure captions, and references. Leave 1-inch margins on all sides, and keep the right side unjustified. Number all pages, starting with the title page, and use line numbering in the text. Use only Times New Roman 12-point font. Manuscripts are compiled and converted to pdf format during the online submission process. Specific instructions are provided at <http://ajot.submit2aota.org/>.

*Title page.* The title should be short (no more than 10 words) and reflect the primary focus of the article. On the unmasked copy (which will be requested if the manuscript is accepted for publication), list full names, degrees, titles, and affiliations of all authors. Designate the corresponding author by providing his or her full address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.

*Abstract and key words.* An abstract of *no more than* 150 words and at least 3 MeSH terms are required for all articles. Abstracts may be structured (organized with the subheadings Objective, Method, Results, and Conclusion) or unstructured (narrative description of the focus and key content of the article). Note that MeSH key words are reviewed by an indexer and may be edited.

*“Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice” section.* Feature-length articles, including evidence reviews, should include a separate section summarizing the implications of the research for occupational therapy practice. This section should consist of a short paragraph, followed by a bulleted list of the practice implications, and should be included in the manuscript’s word count.

*Acknowledgments page.* The acknowledgments page is included in the unmasked copy only. This page follows the last page of the text and precedes the reference list. Brief acknowledgments may include names of persons who contributed to the research or article but who are not authors (e.g., a statistician) followed by acknowledgments of grant support. Prior presentation of the paper at a meeting should be briefly described last.

*References.* Follow the **6th edition** of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010) for referencing. List references in alphabetical order starting on the

page after the last page of text (in the masked version) or after the acknowledgments (in the unmasked version). In-text citations should use author–date format. References to journal articles must include the doi, and URLs must link to the specific document being cited, not a general website. Personal communications and other nonretrievable citations are described in the text only; provide a name and date for a person and a name, date, and address for an organization. Authors are solely responsible for the accuracy and completeness of their references and for correct text citation.

Below are examples of commonly used reference listings:

- *Journal Article (hard copy or not available online):*

Dunton, W. R., Jr. (1926). An historical note. *Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 5(6), 427–439.

- *Journal Article (online version, with digital object identifier [doi]):*

Arbesman, M., & Lieberman, D. (2011). Methodology for the systematic reviews on occupational therapy for adults with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65, 490–496. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2011.00257>

- *Journal Article (online version, no doi):*

Gram, M., & Smed, K. (2011). We can drink our coffee more slowly: Discursive uses of age in relation to holiday consumption—Examples among Danish and German mature travellers. *E-Journal of Applied Psychology*, 7(1), 2–7. Retrieved from <http://ojs.lib.swin.edu.au/index.php/ejap/article/view/229/241>

- *Book With Corporate Author and Author as Publisher:*

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

World Health Organization. (2001). *International classification of functioning, disability and health*. Geneva: Author.

- *Book With Author(s):*

Frank, G. (2000). *Venus on wheels: Two decades of dialogue on disability, biography, and being female in America*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- *Edited Book:*

Law, M. (Ed.). (1998). *Client-centered occupational therapy*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.

- *Chapter in Edited Book:*

Case-Smith, J. (2010). Evidence-based practice in occupational therapy for children with an autism spectrum disorder. In H. M. Kuhaneck & R. Watling (Eds.), *Autism: A comprehensive occupational therapy approach* (3rd ed., pp. 701–742). Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.

## Tables

Provide full titles, and begin each table on a new page after the references. Number the tables consecutively as they appear in

the text. Data appearing in tables should supplement, not duplicate, the text. Double-check column totals. Be sure that any numbers repeated in the text match the numbers that appear in the table. Define all abbreviations and explain any empty cells in a footnote to each table.

### **Figures and Illustrations**

Number figures in order of mention in the text. Figures (including charts, diagrams, and photographs) *must* be submitted as high-resolution digitized electronic files (minimum 600 dpi). Figures must be submitted in black and white. Each figure must be uploaded to the BenchPress system as a separate file that is named in accordance with the figure number (e.g., "Figure 1.tif"); figures that are embedded in the manuscript will be removed from the file by the manuscript processing system.

Provide a caption for each figure. List all captions on one page, double-spaced. Place the figure caption page after the references. Provide source information for photographs and line art, and ensure that permission has been obtained to reprint figures that have been previously published or have not been created by the article authors (see "Permissions" below). Obtain photo releases from all identifiable persons appearing in photos (form is available from AOTA Press).

### **Note: Limit on Number of Tables and Figures**

No more than four art elements—that is, any combination of tables and figures—may be submitted with each article. Reviewers will not consider more than four art elements. Authors of accepted manuscripts who believe readers will benefit from additional tables or figures may submit those items during the production process as supplemental materials. Supplemental materials are not typeset and are posted, at the Editor-in-Chief's discretion, with the online version of the article exactly as they are submitted.

### **Statistics**

Authors must provide references for statistical tests used or described in the article. When reporting *t* and *F* statistics, provide degrees of freedom (*df*). *dfs* are not required for  $\chi^2$  statistics.

### **Tests and Assessment Tools**

Authors must provide references for all tests and assessment tools mentioned in the article or used in the research being described, including tools mentioned in tables or lists of assessments. Tests and assessment tools listed in supplemental Evidence Tables, however, do not need to be referenced.

### **Abbreviations**

Do not use abbreviations in the title or abstract of the article; the use of abbreviations in the text should be kept to a minimum.

### **Permissions**

Authors who wish to reprint tables, figures, or long quotations from other sources are responsible for obtaining permission from

the copyright holder. Letters of permission with original signatures from the copyright holder or an authorized representative must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief at the time of the initial submission. AOTA does not reimburse authors for any expense incurred when obtaining permission to reprint. The need for permission applies to adapted tables and figures as well as to exact copies.

Signed statements of permission to publish must accompany all photographs of identifiable persons at the time of submission.

Authors must provide signed statements of permission from people cited for personal communications at the time of submission.

### **Derivative Work**

Authors who are submitting derivative work using a data set from which other papers were published must provide the publication information for those other papers in the cover letter.

### **Manuscript Review**

Manuscripts and reviews are confidential materials. The existence of a manuscript under review is not revealed to anyone beyond the editorial staff. All submitted manuscripts are initially reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief for suitability for the journal. Suitable manuscripts are then sent to editorial board members or guest reviewers for peer review. The identities of the reviewers and of the authors are kept confidential. Initial and subsequent review takes approximately 3 months. All accepted manuscripts are subject to copyediting. Authors will receive a copy of the edited manuscript for review and final approval before publication. The authors assume final responsibility for the content of articles, including changes made in copyediting.

### **Copyright and Patent**

On acceptance of the manuscript, authors are required to convey copyright ownership to AOTA. Manuscripts published in the journal are copyrighted by AOTA and may not be published elsewhere without permission. To obtain permission to reprint journal material, go to the Copyright Clearance Center website at [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com).

Any device, equipment, splint, or other item described with explicit directions for construction in an article submitted to *AJOT* for publication is not protected by AOTA copyright and can be produced for commercial purposes and patented by others, unless the item was already patented or its patent is pending at the time the article is submitted.

### **Author and Reviewer Ethics**

It is expected that *AJOT* authors and reviewers will adhere to ethical standards expressed in the *Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics* (2015) (AOTA, 2015) and elsewhere. Plagiarism and violations of confidentiality will be handled in accordance with the processes set forth in the *Enforcement Procedures for the Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics and Ethics Standards* (AOTA, 2014a).

## Checklist for Authors

- Register at <http://ajot.submit2aota.org/> and follow online submission instructions.
- Submitted manuscript contains no identifying information about specific people and places.
- All references are in APA (6th ed.) style and have been checked for accuracy and completeness and for exact match between list and text.
- Pages are numbered, starting with the title page.
- Lines are numbered in the main text.
- A section including a bulleted list summarizing the implications of the research for occupational therapy practice is included.
- Written permissions have been obtained as needed for photographs, personal communications, and copyrighted material.
- Digital files and captions are provided for all figures.
- All material is double-spaced (including abstract, references, quotations, figure captions).
- The Copyright Transfer/Author Certification/Financial Disclosure Form has been signed by each author and uploaded at <http://ajot.submit2aota.org/>. ▲

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