



## COMDIS-HSD writing workshop

# How to use tables in your paper

Tables are one of the best ways to present your results and they can save you valuable words if you are struggling with your word count. Clarity and simplicity are the watchwords; less is often more.

1

### Do you need a table?

First, ask whether you need a table at all. Some data will fit neatly into the narrative of your results section. Only use tables when they really add value.

2

### Less is often more

If you do decide to use a table, strive for simplicity. Remember that your results section should relate clearly to your objectives. Keep this in mind and your tables should stay streamlined and relevant.

3

### Can your table stand alone?

The acid test of a good table is that it can stand alone. The title should tell the reader what is being measured, where and over what time period. It should be well labeled and any abbreviations should be spelled out in full in a footnote.

4

### Only use the detail you need

Don't go into more detail than necessary. Do you really need two decimal places in your data to get the message across? If you can use round numbers, do so and keep the formatting tidy and consistent. Do not use vertical lines in a table and limit the use of horizontal lines.

5

### Get an opinion and check your proofs

Ask a colleague to review your tables and don't assume that once they are published they will be exactly as submitted. Mistakes can creep in during the journal's editorial process, so check the proofs carefully.

Summarised from a presentation by Dr Rony Zachariah as part of The Union and MSF SORT-IT course 