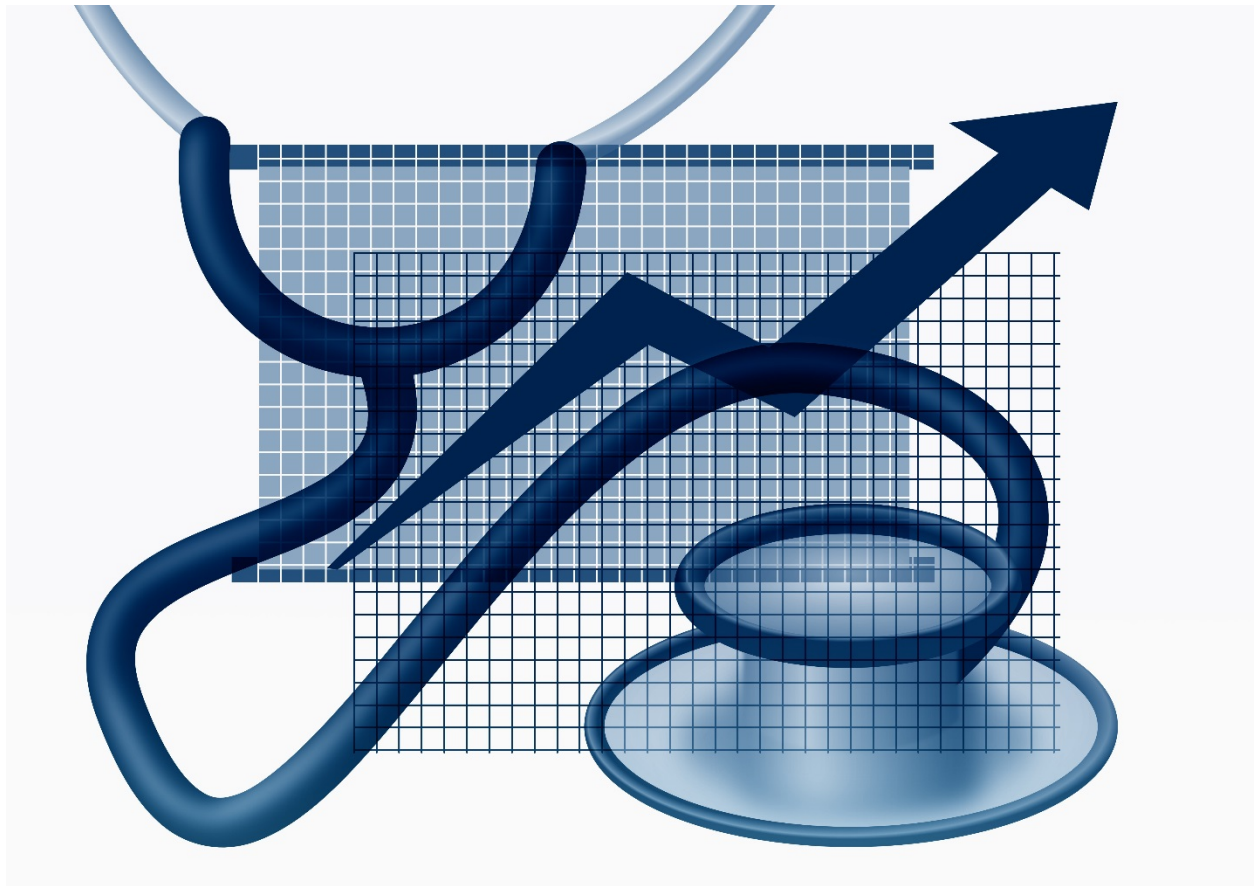

Tips for Creating Professional Reports



Patricia Iyer



Tips for Creating Professional Reports

Create powerful professional reports by using these techniques.

1. Every report needs a date.
2. After typing the date, skip a line and write the name of the attorney who hired you to review the case, followed by the name of the law firm, address, city and state. Don't address the report to the law firm without including your client's name.
3. Include a caption, such as Jane Morter vs. St. Theresa's Hospital. Put the caption in bold to make it stand out. If you do not know the name of the defendant, put the plaintiff's name in bold.
4. Be consistent in denoting dates. You may spell out dates in words or in numbers. Both are correct. Pick one system and stay with it throughout the report.
5. Use complete sentences. Do not write a report like you would document in a medical record (in incomplete sentences).
6. Explain commonly used scales, such as the Glasgow Coma Score or the Pain Score. Don't assume the reader knows what "GCS 12" means, or "pain of 7/10".
7. Do not capitalize medical conditions, unless the words are proper names, such as Williams Syndrome.
8. Consider using AM and PM instead of military time, which tends to confuse people. Use either a.m. or AM. There are no such abbreviations as am or pm.
9. Use past tense when describing events documented in the medical record.
10. Hyphenate ages, such as 35-year-old or thirty-five year-old.
11. Use headers to break up your report into sections, and do not include a blank line below the header. To do so makes it float between paragraphs instead of anchoring it to the text that follows. There is no need to underline a header. Use bold instead.
12. Make sure the spacing is consistent. You can adjust spacing of lines by selecting single spacing. In Word at the home tab, select paragraph, line spacing. Rarely should you use anything other than single spacing.
13. Avoid passive voice. This is an example of passive voice: "He was taken to the emergency room" versus active voice: "He went to the emergency room."

Activate your readability statistics on your word processor (check your help file on how to do this) and check the percentage of passive voice after it analyzes your document after the spell check. You should have less than 10% passive voice.

14. Explain normal values the first time you cite a lab result. For example, "She had a glucose of 283 (normal is 70-100)."
15. Spell out a medical term the first time you use it, and then place the abbreviation after the term in parentheses. After that, you may use the abbreviation. Example: The nurse inserted a nasogastric tube (NGT).

Top Strategies for Editing and Proofreading

1. Walk away from your report after you write it. Allow some time to gain perspective so that you can read it with fresh eyes. Do not attempt to edit and proofread it at the same time you have finished it.
2. Step into the reader's shoes when you edit your work. Remember you are writing for a non-healthcare audience. Don't use medical slang. Don't use complex medical terms without explaining them.
3. Edit from a paper copy of the report, not from the computer monitor.
4. Editing and proofreading are different. Do them separately.
5. Read your sentences out loud after you write them to be sure they are coherent.
6. Use spell check but do not rely on spell check to catch all of your spelling errors. It will not detect "the nurse sued the thermometer..." or "the results came form the laboratory..." or "the patient was given a trail of weaning..."
7. Save your work regularly as you write on your computer. Power failures can wipe out hours of work.

Train yourself to accept criticism from yourself and others. It is human nature to recoil from criticism. Most people equate their writing with their intellect, and therefore interpret feedback on their writing as the same as an attack on their intelligence. The problem with this attitude is that it is impossible to improve if you wall yourself off from criticism. Almost no one is a great writer from the beginning of his or her career. Attorneys judge LNCs in part on their writing skills.

Develop and continuously improve your writing skills. This is part of your professional responsibilities. Excellent writing skills will create more business for you, result in less time rewriting, and improve your confidence.



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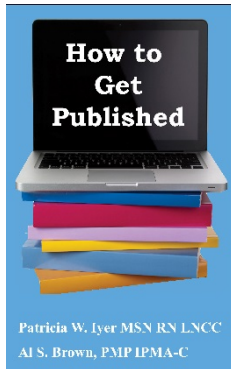
Patricia Iyer MSN RN LNCC has written or edited over 675 chapters, books, online courses, articles or case studies. She has written or proofread thousands of LNC reports.

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How to Get Published

Patricia W. Iyer MSN RN LNCC and Al S. Brown, PMP, IPMA-C



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- Would you like a client to say, “I see you’ve been published. I have work for you”?
- Would you like to reach hundreds of thousands of people with your message?
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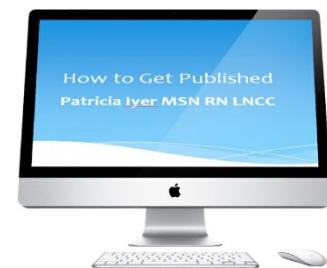
Al S. Brown and I share our triumphs and hard learned lessons in this book. You will learn practical content that will guide you through the process of putting together publications. Al and I have written **hundreds** of articles, blog posts, case studies, online courses, chapters, and books.

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