



Determining Authorship and Contributor Order

This resource document provides guidance to help DP18-1815, 1816, and 1817 DHDSP recipients considerations for determining authorship order associated with group authorship. It explains the difference between authors and contributors, the primary tasks of the lead author, and ways to decide who qualifies for authorship. This document offers authorship order guidance specifically related to manuscript submission for scientific journals.

Group authorship is increasingly common in research and evaluation disciplines, making the issue of author sequence and non-author contributor recognition an integral part of the dissemination planning process. For more information about managing writing projects, see Appendix D in *The Writing System* textbook and the fourth writing workshop recording posted on AMP.

Who is considered an author?

An author is someone who has been involved in the study or program, analysis, and written reporting of the findings. Authorship credit is typically based on individuals planning and contributing to some component of **(1) the conceptual model, research design, and methodological approach, (2) providing analysis and interpretation of data, or (3) collaborative drafting and revision of the article or written product for content.** Authors play an active role in the development of the written product from concept to approval for publication.

Who is a non-author contributor?

A non-author contributor is any collaborator who does not meet all **three criteria** listed above but who provided financial, conceptual, instrumental, moral, or editorial assistance. Additionally, journals may also have instituted their own contributorship policy. The lead author should consult with this policy which is typically listed under manuscript submission guidelines.

What are the primary tasks of a lead author?

The **lead or first author** is expected to contribute the most to the written product and receives highest credit for being listed as primary on the publication. Shared co-first authorship is defined as two or more authors who have worked together on a publication and contributed equally. The equal contribution is often indicated in the fine print of a published paper and should be noted on the title page during submission. The lead or co-first author(s) are responsible for several primary tasks which include:



- Obtaining the journal guidelines and ensuring the requirements are met
- Coordinate writing of the first draft of the manuscript
- Coordinating the feedback from co-authors
- Ensuring all authors agree before the final version is submitted
- Coordinating the signing of the copyright agreement
- Acting as the corresponding author (the designated contact person who corresponds with the journal's editor(s))
- Responding to reviewer comments (if invited)
- Reviewing the proofs before final publication



Determining Authorship and Contributor Order

What order should authors be listed in?

An important consideration for authorship order is fostering equity in the process (Liboiron et al., 2017). Co-authors can be at various stages of their careers and possess different levels of institutional status. A more senior-level professional and author may opt to be last on the publication to support early-stage co-authors who do not have as many publications. Sequence may determine weight of authorship contribution. In instances where there is established equal contribution, then alphabetical sequence by author last name is employed to maintain consonance regarding level of credit. Authors may also decide on ordering based upon a percent contribution model with authors contributing more intellectual content being listed first or earlier on in authorship order. Regardless of whichever method group authors employ to determine final authorship order, it is essential that all co-authors agree with the final order of authorship before the publication is submitted for review.

Seniority

Senior authors come last to support junior authors being first author

- Junior, A., Midcareer, A., and Senior, A. (2022). Title of the paper. *Journal*, 1(1), 1-10.

Alphabetical

Authors have equal contributions so organize arbitrarily

- Bailey, M., Grey, M., Shepherd, D. (2022). Title of the paper. *Journal*, 1(1), 1-10.

Percentage

Authors are listed by the amount of work they contributed

- Fifty-percent, A., Thirty-percent, A., Twenty-percent, A. (2022). Title of the paper. *Journal*, 1(1), 1-10.

References

- Lapidow, A., & Scudder, P. (2019). Shared first authorship. *Journal of the Medical Library Association: JMLA*, 107(4), 618–620. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2019.700>
- Liboiron, M., Ammendolia, J., Winsor, K., Zahara, A., Bradshaw, H., Melvin, J., ...Liboiron, G. (2017). Equity in author order: A feminist laboratory's approach. *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 3(2), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v3i2.28850>
- <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html#two>
- <https://provost.yale.edu/policies/academic-integrity/guidance-authorship-scholarly-or-scientific-publications>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4520107/>
- <https://www.aje.com/en/arc/ethics-manuscript-authorship/>

Funding for this initiative was provided to the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) through a Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (NU380T000303-03-02). NNPHI collaborated with the CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion on this initiative. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.