



# Setting up and running a journal club in practice

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## **Introduction**

This document is a brief guide to setting up and running a journal club in practice.

# What is a journal club?

Journal clubs are regularly held meetings where individuals discuss recent articles in the scientific literature. They often act as a bridge between research and practice, as they provide a framework for veterinary professionals to explore the latest research, and then apply what they have learned in clinical practice.

# Why run a journal club?

There are several benefits of journal clubs. They can:

- help link research and clinical practice
- help participants keep abreast of current research and new literature
- help develop the critical appraisal skills of participants
- stimulate debate and improved understanding of current topics within a practice
- assist with generating practice guidelines or protocols
- encourage the use of evidence-based veterinary medicine
- support quality improvement initiatives
- provide continuing professional development (CPD)
- encourage teamwork

# Setting up a journal club

When setting up a journal club in practice, it is important for your practice team to think about the purpose of the club as a whole, and to set the goals and desired outcomes as a group. This will encourage 'buy in', as well as allow you to evaluate the sessions and measure their success within the team.

There is no single ideal format for a journal club, as this will be influenced by the participants of each individual club and the goals that they set.

Points to consider include:

- whether the club will be held face to face or online
- frequency and timing
- length of the session
- who will be attending; is it the whole team or members who have a common interest, for example, in surgery? Will attendance be mandatory?
- who will be leading the sessions; the facilitator should be experienced, so if you would like to rotate this role within the team, you should make sure that the team members asked to lead the sessions have the necessary skills (critical appraisal, presentation, etc.) first.
- how the article will be selected: will the leader of the

session select it or will the article be selected following discussion within the team? Ideally the articles should relate to a real-life clinical issue for the practice.

- the tools that will be used for the critical appraisal: using an agreed toolkit such as [RCVS Knowledge's EBVM toolkit](#) will help create a consistent approach.
- how the agreed outcomes will be measured, and how frequently; what will success look like?

## Managing the sessions

Below is one possible format for a session.

- Facilitator welcomes participants and gives an introduction to the session.
- Facilitator gives an overview of the article, including:
  - reference
  - question/hypothesis it addresses
  - time for the participants to quickly review the relevant sections of the article
  - brief appraisal using the agreed method. This

should cover the study design, level of evidence and results.

- Discussion within the team of the strengths and weaknesses of the study.
- Discussion about the implications of the study for your practice. Is the evidence robust enough to make a decision? If so what, if anything, should you change?

Notes should be taken of the discussion and key recommendations so that they can be circulated within the team and retained for future use.

## Tips for success

- Regular set times will encourage attendance, as participants will be able to schedule their attendance in advance. Early in the week is usually better.
- Have strict start and finish times.
- For face-to-face meetings, always provide refreshments and make sure the room is of an appropriate size and layout.
- Good publicity of times, locations, topics and selected articles will improve attendance.

- Ensure the question the article is addressing is of relevance to everyday work. Ask [RCVS Knowledge library](#) for help sourcing relevant articles if necessary. Sign up to [inFOCUS](#), RCVS Knowledge's free journal watch, to stay up to date with the latest veterinary clinical developments.
- Have copies of the article available at the session and set aside a short period of time at the beginning to allow people to scan the article.
- Create a database of the discussions and any recommendations for the practice. This gives the club a tangible product and creates a useful resource for the practice.

## Copyright

Check the conditions of use on publishers' websites to see if they permit circulation of articles to journal club members. Each publisher has its own terms and conditions and it is important that you check for each journal title.





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## Further reading

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