

Authorship guidelines adapted from Washington University authorship guidelines.
<https://research.wustl.edu/policy-authorship-scientific-scholarly-publications/>

I. Defining Authorship

An author is generally considered to be an individual who has made substantial intellectual contributions to a scientific investigation. All authors should meet the following three criteria, and all those who meet the criteria should be authors:

Scholarship: Contribute significantly to the conception, design, execution, and/or analysis and interpretation of data.

Authorship: Participate in drafting, reviewing, and/or revising the manuscript for intellectual content.

Approval: Approve the manuscript to be published.

An administrative relationship, acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of a research group alone does not constitute authorship.

It is recognized that definitions of authorship differ among the various scientific disciplines and professional journals, as may standards for “substantial” and “scholarly effort”, and the extent to which authors must participate in scholarship and authorship. For example, design/development of research equipment, or collection of a specific data set, may be substantial scholarly effort in certain disciplines. The expectation of this policy is that standards and criteria for authorship in an academic discipline will be widely recognized and consistent across that discipline, and consistent with the appropriate professional association, and/or journal (publication) in which the work appears.

II. Lead Author

As a practical matter in the case of publications with multiple authors, one author should be designated as the lead author. The lead author assumes overall responsibility for the manuscript, and also often serves as the managerial and corresponding author, as well as providing a significant contribution to the research effort. A lead author is not necessarily the principal investigator or project leader. The lead author is responsible for:

Authorship: Including as co-authors all and only those individuals who meet the authorship criteria set forth in this policy.

Approval: Providing the draft of the manuscript to each individual contributing author for review and consent for authorship. The lead author should obtain from all coauthors their agreement to be designated as such and their approval of the manuscript. A journal may have specific requirements governing author review and consent, which must be followed.

Integrity: The lead author is responsible for the integrity of the work as a whole, and ensuring that reasonable care and effort has been taken to determine that all the data are complete, accurate, and reasonably interpreted.

III. Co-authors

All co-authors of a publication are responsible for:

Authorship: By providing consent to authorship to the lead author, co-authors acknowledge that they meet the authorship criteria set forth in section 1 of this policy. A coauthor should have participated sufficiently in the work to take responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

Approval: By providing consent to authorship to the lead author, co-authors are acknowledging that they have reviewed and approved the manuscript.

Integrity: Each co-author is responsible for the content of all appropriate portions of the manuscript, including the integrity of any applicable research. An individual retains the right to refuse co-authorship of a manuscript if s/he does not satisfy the criteria for authorship.

IV. Acknowledgments

Individuals who may have made some contribution to a publication, but who do not meet the criteria for authorship, such as staff, editorial assistants, medical writers, or other individuals, can provide a valuable contribution to the writing and editing of publications. Since those contributions do not meet the criteria for authorship under this policy, those individuals should be listed in an acknowledgement and/or contributorship section of the work.

V. Unacceptable Authorship

Guest, gift, and ghost authorship are all inconsistent with the definition of authorship, and are unacceptable and a violation of this policy.

Guest (honorary, courtesy, or prestige) authorship is defined as granting authorship out of appreciation or respect for an individual, or in the belief that expert standing of the guest will increase the likelihood of publication, credibility, or status of the work.

Gift authorship is credit, offered from a sense of obligation, tribute, or dependence, within the context of an anticipated benefit, to an individual who has not contributed to the work.

Ghost authorship is the failure to identify as an author, someone who made substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript that merited authorship, or an unnamed individual who participated in writing the manuscript. Ghost authorship may range from authors for hire with the understanding that they will not be credited, to major contributors not named as an author.

VI. Authorship Order

The order of authors is a collective decision of the authors or study group. This policy does not address questions or disputes regarding the order of authorship on publications. It is not possible for the University to define the order of authorship. In conjunction with the lead author, co-authors should discuss authorship order at the onset of the project and revise their decision as needed. All authors must work together to make these informed judgments.

Should authors fail to resolve disputes about the order of authors, the chair or head of the involved department(s) should mediate an effort to resolve the dispute. If not successful, such mediation may be addressed by the school Dean. In cases that cannot be resolved, the lead author, in consultation with the department chair and/or Dean, will have the final authority to determine the order of authorship.

Note that co-first authors or co-senior authors can be indicated by adding an asterisk (*) to indicate equal distributions of the authors.

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VIII. Financial Conflicts of Interest

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