As a nurse who wears the hats of author, reviewer, and editor, I am always looking for tools to simplify my work. I enjoy reading books about language and grammar and dislike reading books on statistics. One of my favorite books is *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss, a charming and witty treatise on the importance of punctuation. If this book had been in existence when I was in my middle school English classes, I probably would have enjoyed school more than I did. But now, as an editor with a considerable workload, an academic with students who prefer text messaging to writing assignments, and a writer who is often under a deadline for an article, presentation, or book chapter, I need quick references to check my work.

I need more help with statistics than grammar so I was delighted when I found the book *How to Report Statistics in Medicine* by Thomas Lang and Michelle Secic (available from the American College of Physicians, list price $64.95). I've had my share of statistics classes but I often need a nudge to my brain to recall or verify what I learned long ago. My criteria for a useful statistics resource were clear definitions of terms, clear and helpful examples, sample layout for various types of tables and graphs, and a comprehensive index. Although this book is also available as an e-book, I purchased the paper copy because it was not clear to me from the website if I could access the electronic version on alternative e-readers. It's possible that searching the e-book might be easier, but I find the paperback I have on my desk fulfills all my criteria and more.

Here are some pearls I learned and use frequently to spot check manuscripts as I edit. “Data described with a standard deviation that exceeds one-half the mean are not normally distributed (assuming that negative values are impossible) and should be described with the median and range or interquartile range....” (Lang & Secic, 2006, p. 11). Following that simple reminder is a clear example with the incorrect and correct way to present the findings. The sample presentation on statistical power for hypothesis testing is comprehensive and easy to follow; I often refer authors to the text to compare what they have written with that sample. Guidelines on exactly what to include in reporting specific types of studies are very explicit, detailing which sections of the book contain expanded guidance on the topic. The entire section on reporting meta-analyses is easy to follow, even for one who took statistics long before meta-analytic techniques became popular.

Using the index I can find answers to questions quickly and each section has a similar format so I know where to look in each chapter for what I need. I especially like the sample presentation boxes, which give me clear examples of how to write the information so it makes sense. Authors could use those clear explanations and examples as they write their manuscripts. Reviewers could use the clear descriptions of statistical terms to verify that authors have used appropriate methods and analytic techniques. *How to Report Statistics in Medicine* is a reference I will have on my desk
for a long time, while *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* resides on my bedside table.

**References**


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