

5 Write a Trending Topic

PEN System Content and Trending Topic Overview

The PEN system is an evidence-based decision support resource developed by Dietitians of Canada. It is designed to help dietitians keep pace with food and nutrition research. The PEN System provides knowledge pathways on a variety of topics relevant to everyday practice, where PEN authors identify relevant literature from various sources, and then critically appraise, grade and synthesize that literature into key practice points to answer specific practice questions.

“Trending Topics” (TT) are a feature on the [PEN home page](#) and are meant to highlight, interpret, and present the evidence to support or refute current/hot or newsworthy nutrition related stories or journal articles that have made the news.

Assignment Learning Outcomes

1. Students translate evidence to create a knowledge product (trending topic) using the PEN System process (**does**).
2. Students apply critical thinking and skills in research appraisal, synthesis and written communication to develop a PEN-style Trending Topic following the Trending Topic Style Guide.

Pre-Assignment

Before beginning the assignment the following PEN resources should be considered to support student familiarity with appraising the literature:

- [Research Methods Background](#)
- [Evidence-Based Process Cycle module](#)
- [Appraising the Literature Module](#)

Assignment

Educators can follow these steps to create this assignment:

1. Identify students to work on developing a trending topic as a university course or practicum assignment.
2. Determine newsworthy topics and related article(s) to assign to the students to be evaluated and developed as a “Trending Topic”.
 - a. Check out the [Trending Topic news feed page](#) to see some of the topics the PEN Team have covered.
 - b. For this assignment, an analysis of one or two articles at the very most on a specific topic area is most suited to a student assignment, verses an analysis of several articles covering a broader topic overview.
 - c. Check out some RSS news feeds to get some trending ideas or sites such as [Medscape](#)
 - d. Create the assignment.

RESOURCE: Trending Topic Style Guide

- [Trending Topic Style Guide](#) [PDF]

In general, trending topics use a conversational tone (friendly, supportive with a goal to make it quick to understand) and follow plain language principles, similar to PEN Social Media Brand Voice as described more fully in the style guide. The writing style should grab the reader's attention and tell a story in 750 – 1000 words.

Keep in mind that the PEN System is an international tool and when referring to dietary guidelines, food guides, labeling issues, etc., to include those from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. See [International Guideline Collections](#) on the PEN home page.

Trending Topic Format/Template:

Below is a brief outline of each of the Trending Topics sections (see [Appendix A](#)). Refer to the Trending Topic Style Guide for writing tips related to the PEN Social Media Brand voice and more details on each template section within a 'Trending Topic'.

Select an image - suggest looking at royalty free sites (e.g., [Pexels](#), [openverse](#))

Headline

(plus a preview sentence which will show on the [Trending Topics news feed page](#))

What's Happening?

This section should briefly state why people are talking about this topic area and why the PEN Team decided to write the trending topic.

The research/The details

This section should walk the reader through the thinking behind the analysis of the study; written in a conversational tone.

RESOURCE | Learn more

Appraise the evidence

Appraisal involves reviewing the related journal article and critiquing it by systematically reviewing its strengths and weaknesses, as it relates to the reliability, validity and application to the specific trending topic. Learn more about how the PEN team [appraises](#) the evidence used to address the practice question.

Appraised evidence is given a [Grade of Evidence](#) based on the quality of evidence.

- Grade A** • The conclusion is supported by good evidence
- Grade B** • The conclusion is supported by fair evidence
- Grade C** • The conclusion is supported by limited evidence or expert opinion
- Grade D** • A conclusion is either not possible or extremely limited because evidence is unavailable and/or poor quality and/or is contradictory

RESOURCE | Evidence Appraisal Tools

- [PEN Evidence Grading Checklist](#)

What does this mean/What now?

This section should provide practical information which the reader can implement.

Additional Resources

Link to knowledge objects in the PEN System.

References - formatted using [NLM Style](#).

3. Distribute the assignment to your students.
4. Consider creating a rubric for assessment. See [Appendix B](#) for a sample rubric which you are welcome to adapt based on your course and assignment objectives.

RESOURCE | The PEN Team is here to help!

The [PEN team](#) can support this assignment to write a trending topic in the following ways:

- Provide a list of trending topics that have potential to be developed.
- Act as a resource for the student / intern /educator.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the PEN Resource Manager at jane.bellman@dietitians.ca

Appendix A

Trending Topic Template

Image:

Headline

(Plus Preview Sentence)

What's Happening?

The Research/Details of the Analysis

What Does this Mean/What Now?

Additional Resources

References

Appendix B

Trending Topic Rubric

| Objectives | 4 Points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point | Score |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|--|-------|
| Headline | Headline/title, intro and image (suggest royalty free resources images) captures reader's attention and accurately describes content | Headline/title, intro and image accurately describes content; interesting enough to grab attention | Headline/title, intro and image describes only a portion of the content; grabs some of the reader's attention | Headline/title, intro and image does not describe content; nor capture reader's attention | |
| Use of news article(s) | Accurate and clear identification of evidence related to the trending news; avoids personal bias | Sources are cited and identified; information is accurate; avoids personal bias | Only some sources are cited; not all sources properly identified; may contain personal bias | One or fewer sources are cited; or sources are improperly identified; contains personal bias | |

| Objectives | 4 Points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point | Score |
|---|--|---|---|---|--------------|
| Provides an analysis of the article | Comprehensively appraises: Study design and methodology Applicability, reliability and validity of the research Any bias, study limitations | Provides appraisal for the following but some areas are weak: Study design and methodology Applicability, reliability and validity of the research Any bias, study limitations | Provides weak appraisal for some of these, but not all: Study design and methodology Applicability, reliability and validity of the research Any bias, study limitations | Limited appraisal is provided | |
| Interesting, Effective Writing Style | Writing is conversational; active voice; concrete/solid practice recommendations provided | Writing is adequate; may be wordy or voice passive or unclear; practice recommendations provided | Writing lacks a clear voice; is wordy or redundant; unclear practice recommendations provided | Writing lacks a clear voice; practice recommendations not adequately provided | |
| Grammar and Spelling | Trending topic is well edited and there are no grammatical or spelling errors | Contains a few grammatical or spelling errors | There are more than 3 grammatical and/or spelling errors | There are quite a number of grammatical and spelling errors | |

| Objectives | 4 Points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point | Score |
|---------------|---|--|--|--|--------------|
| Format | <p>Follows Trending Topic Style Guide and template including guidelines for word count, titling, additional content and referencing</p> <p>Information is in descending order of importance; strongly organized with clear flow</p> | <p>Generally follows Trending Topic Style Guide and template</p> <p>Organization and flow of information is adequate</p> | <p>Follows only a few items in the Trending Topic Style Guide and template</p> <p>Information is a little disorganized; lacks effective flow</p> | <p>Doesn't follow Trending Topic Style Guide and template</p> <p>Information is disorganized; does not flow well</p> | |
| | 24 | 18 | 12 | 6 | Total /24 |