Tables are used exclusively for lists of patients, medications, results, etc. While tables seem simple, careful design is needed as even small mistakes can have a significant impact on:

- **Patient safety**: e.g. Truncated names will lead to wrong patient selection; column headers scrolling out of view will lead users to read the wrong test result value.
- **Efficiency**: e.g. Users will waste a lot of time scanning and scrolling if no search or sort is provided.

This set of guidelines is just a small sample of the available guidelines for table design.

### To prevent common errors
- Keep the headers visible at all times (do not allow them to scroll out of sight)
- Use multiple lines for long column headers (do not truncate them)
- If truncation of a table is unavoidable: Try using multiple lines or tooltips for showing what does not fit in the cell
- Avoid using error-prone abbreviations, and provide a long version in a tooltip (see http://www.ismp.org/tools/errorproneabbreviations.pdf)
- Never truncate patient names (see Color Use Brief https://sbmi.uth.edu/nccd/SED/Briefs/sedb-g01.htm)

### To improve task efficiency
- Place the most important columns on the left
- Group together columns (or rows) that are used together

### To help users find data
- Make the important information stand out (https://sbmi.uth.edu/nccd/SED/Briefs/sedg01.htm)
- Use light white space between the rows (instead of heavy gridlines)
- Use a different style for headers

### To make information readable
- Avoid leaving any hanging zeros (e.g. 5.0 vs 5)
- Align numeric values to the right while keeping all other values left-aligned

### To keep the table compact
- Avoid horizontal scrolling if at all possible (or indicate that there are more columns)
- Reduce white space by calculating the initial width of each column from the data in that column
- Allow resizing of columns (but calculate a minimum and maximum)
- Only the last column should be stretched to fill horizontal space

### For large tables
- Provide search functionality
- Permit re-sorting of tables with a click on the column header (show sort icons and choose the default sorting carefully)

### To indicate editable columns
- Change the mouse pointer when the user moves over an editable field, and add an icon in the column header (e.g. a pen icon)

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**Learn more at** [https://sbmi.uth.edu/nccd/SED/Briefs/sedb-g02.htm](https://sbmi.uth.edu/nccd/SED/Briefs/sedb-g02.htm)

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