

Abstract support - list of resources and advice for writing abstracts

Acpi: Academic Conferences and Publishing International. <https://www.academic-conferences.org/policies/abstract-guidelines-for-papers/>

Aises.org: <http://www.aises.org/sites/default/files/documents/National%20Conference/Abstract%20Guidelines%20and%20Samples.pdf>

Baker, Catherine. <https://bakercatherine.wordpress.com/2017/03/15/how-to-write-a-conference-abstract-a-five-part-plan-for-pitching-your-research-at-almost-anything/>

Conte, Sarah. <https://www.aje.com/en/arc/make-great-first-impression-6-tips-writing-strong-abstract/>

Emmerson, Phil. <http://www.pgf.rgs.org/top-ten-tips/top-ten-tips-for-writing-a-conference-abstract/>

Kelsky, Karen. <https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/12/how-today-how-to-write-a-paper-abstract/>

McCurry, Dee. <https://www.exordo.com/blog/how-to-write-an-abstract-for-a-conference/>

Sonntag, Albrecht. <http://www.uaces.org/resources/how-to-write-a-good-abstract-for-a-conference-paper/>

Excerpt from 'GradLife': McGill Blogs

Here are some strategies I have come to find helpful over the years, or some that have been shared in our student-initiated *Academic Writing Group* in our department:

- Clarify for yourself first what you want this specific presentation to address (i.e. not your whole thesis but an interesting *angle* of it, or one "story" that is part of the larger picture).
- Know who the audience is and what the themes of the conference are. Include keywords that attract the right people and that are in line with the main topics of the conference.
- Focus NOT on being comprehensive, but to-the-point, clear, interesting, and just informative enough.
- Think in terms of headings and devote one sentence to each one:
 - Background (emphasize "problem" or "gap" in previous research)
 - Aim or objective of study you are presenting (linking this with background)
 - Participants/methods (only what we absolutely need to know)
 - Predictions and actual results (in line with or contrary to your expectations?)
 - Conclusions / importance of this work (contributions to the field, novelty)
- Only provide the background and methodological details which are absolutely necessary to understanding your objectives and results. It is natural to want to include everything about the background, all your measures/tasks or even participant demographics. But if you don't have room,

you need to make decisions about what the priorities are for readers (and reviewers!), keeping your audience and take-home-message in mind.

- Make your work accessible and interesting. Could readers tell what is new or exciting about this work? Why should people come and see your talk or your poster?
- Think fresh. Chances are, you have written about this work dozens of times before, and you are comfortable laying out the arguments in a certain way or order. But, breaking free from the way you have always written about your thesis can help get your point across more clearly and concisely for this specific presentation. Be flexible!
- Give yourself time to distance yourself from the abstract for a little while. This time away from your words will allow you to more objectively decide what's essential and what's not. This is difficult to do, as we are so busy and tend to wait until the deadline is only a few hours away...
- Ask a colleague to look over your abstract. They are not emotionally-attached to any of your words and could easily reword or trim if need be. Even better if your colleague is outside of your immediate field, as he/she will indicate whether everything is clear or if something feels incomplete/confusing.
- As tempting as it might be when you're on a roll with cutting down your text, do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless you have defined them first. Reviewers and readers are likely to get annoyed with this.
- Pay attention to the submission guidelines, as organizers sometimes indicate preferences about headings, references and figures.

In short (ha! Do forgive the pun), putting effort into writing a good abstract not only serves as your ticket to that conference (and to whatever city it is in), opening up doors for making your work known and for establishing connections with other researchers in your area, it also gets you thinking about and writing about your work in different ways, angles, and words. This is a valuable writing exercise and a stepping-stone for writing your thesis and/or manuscripts for publication. So, thankfully, it seems the process is as constructive as it is painful!