

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACT

Parts of the Abstract

Title: The title should be short, but descriptive. It should indicate the relationship or question you investigated.

Author(s) Line: This should include the full name of each author with his/her corresponding institution and location information.

General topic: The first part of the abstract introduces the study. It should describe the goals, significance, and background for the study. This is usually accomplished in one or two sentences that describe the general topic to be investigated and why it is important. Often this is most easily accomplished by relating something about the state of the field and why you did the experiments.

Specific Question or Relationship: Write one or two sentences describing the specific question you are addressing or the relationship you are investigating in the presented research. Also, concisely highlight the significance of the specific question to the general topic and scientific field.

Method: The second section of the abstract summarizes the methods used and describes how the study was designed and carried out. This can be accomplished in several sentences, and may be shorter or longer depending on the complexity of the study. Do not attempt to write a detailed procedure as seen in a journal article. Only give a general overview of the experimental design.

Results: Write one or two sentences explaining your experimental findings. Be as specific as possible. State only the major findings of your study. These should relate to the objectives that you described in the introductory section of your abstract. This section is variable in length, depending on the number and complexity of the findings, but is typically two to three sentences long.

Conclusions: The final part of the abstract consists of one or two sentences giving your interpretation of the results and the overall significance of the study. You should state the impact of the present work and any implications for future research. This is critical- be sure to tell your reader why your work is important! How are your results contributing to progress in your field of research?

Additional Guidelines for the Preparation of a Scientific Abstract

- Verb tense: the common practice is to express the work being described in the past tense.
- The abstract should be one paragraph, single-spaced, with no indentations.
- Each professional journal or meeting will have its own guidelines for abstract preparation. Be sure to follow them carefully.
- Abstracts can vary by discipline. Review several abstracts in your field to become familiar with

the accepted format. Your conference website is a great resource for abstract archives from the previous years where you can see examples (but remember, they may not all be good abstracts!) Also, use your conference website to find the specific rules- usually under 'abstract submission guidelines'.

- Do not include any published data in your abstract. Only new, unpublished results can be included in an abstract.

RESOURCES FOR PREPARING SCIENTIFIC POSTERS

Instructional Websites

- Design of Scientific Posters, Pennsylvania State University
<http://writing.engr.psu.edu/posters.html>
- Creating effective poster presentations - An Effective Poster
<http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/>
- Preparing a Poster Presentation, American College of Physicians
http://www.acponline.org/residents_fellows/competitions/abstract/prepare/pos_pres.htm

Books

Preparing Scientific Illustrations: A Guide to Better Posters, Presentations, and Publications by Mary H. Briscoe

Scientist's Guide to Poster Presentations by Peter J. Gosling

Websites for Printing Research Posters

www.Posters4Research.com

www.postersession.com

www.megaprint.com

NOTE: Most institutions have offices that offer classes, seminars, and tutorials, intended to assist investigators as they prepare their data for presentation to others. Also, many departments house equipment for printing posters. Know what resources are available to you at your institution and ask questions when needed!