# ABSTRACT WRITING

## And How to Get Selected for a Presentation Every Time…

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# Abstract: Forms

## 2 Forms

*Summary of Scientific Paper*

- Precedes the body
- Format specified by journal
- Usually no abbreviations
- Flows easily from the manuscript

*Submission to a meeting*

- Stands alone
- Format specified by society
- May include tables, figures

# In Preparation

## Am I ready to submit an abstract to a meeting?

- Identify a project
- What is the hypothesis
- Step back: what would I need to show to prove/refute it?
- Do I have all the pieces?
- Is it convincing?
- Is it statistically significant?
- Is it important?

# Timing

When in doubt, hold off until it’s a beautifully wrapped package!

# Title

## Style Options

*Description of Project*

- "The effect of X on Y"
- More Precise
- Avoid run on / dull trap

***vs.***

*Conclusion of the Paper*

- "X blocks Y"
- More Dramatic
- Avoid overreaching

Shorter captures our attention: 10-12 words

Use high impact words: search engine identifiers

*Don't get too cute!*

# Background

*Goals:*

- Teach
- Enhance Interest

*Strategies:*

- General to specific
- Known to unknown

1-2 Sentences ONLY!!!

No References

*Read it out loud: WHO CARES?!*

# Hypothesis

## Backbone of the entire abstract

*Reviewer questions of the hypothesis:*

- Is it worthy?
- Is it focused?
- Does the experimental design address it?
- Do the results support/refute it?
- Do the conclusions refer to it?

# Hypothesis

Tips:

Simple declarative statement

Active voice

- The cashier counted the money.
- The money was counted by the cashier.

Use the word "**hypothesis**"

- "We hypothesized that"..

*Lack of a clear hypothesis is the most common cause for rejection*

# Methods

How was the hypothesis tested?

*Use sufficient detail:*

- Doses
- *n*
- omit descriptions of standard techniques
- Design: always include CONTROLS
- Always include statistics

Is design thorough? Is work credible?

# Results

## Include actual DATA!

*Format: guided by clarity*

- Text: allows summary and data “all in one”
- Graphs: easy to interpret, high impact
- Tables: esp. for large volumes of numbers
- Include statistical results: avoid “*trends*”
- Always include statistics

*Amount?*

- Whatever needed to test hypothesis

# Conclusions

Refer back to hypothesis

Answer: Who Cares?

- "How does this change our understanding?"

Don't overgeneralize: state context of finding

- Be humble
- Let work stand on own merits

# Once it's written…

Revise it

- Delete all extraneous words
- Change passive to active voice
- Check abbreviations (define 1st time)

Sit down with PI

- Bring healthy dose of humility

# Know the Process

- “Blinded” abstracts are batched by topic and sent to 5-10 members for review and grading

- Rank order

- Grades are discussed and “adjustments” made

- Generally speaking
  - Plenary session: highest ranking abstracts
  - Oral Presentation: Next batch
  - Poster Presentation: Next batch

# Know the Audience

- Unpredictable Expertise

- Grading batches of abstracts (50-300)

- Expect 2-3 minutes per abstract

- This is “volunteer work”

  - Grader is tired, overworked, and probably cranky
  - Reading/scoring happens after-hours
  - If a reviewer has to re-read a sentence, then the battle is already lost

# Writing Style

- Simple Declarative sentences
  - Write like Hemingway
  - If an 8th grader can't read it then re-write it
  - Avoid commas; split it into two sentences
- Active Voice
- Minimize:
  - abbreviations
  - acronyms
  - "group" designations

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