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” vs.
- More Precise
- Avoid run on / dull trap

Conclusion of the Paper
- “X blocks Y” vs.
- 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