

Writing an Abstract

Presenting a poster or paper at a scientific conference is almost always preceded by the submission of an abstract on the work to be presented. An abstract is a summary of the research to be presented, which begins with brief introductory statements about the research and concludes with a statement of the significance of the research project. It is imperative that you write a quality abstract in order for it to be accepted. In addition many conference participants choose which posters/talks to attend based on the information contained in the abstract. A well-written abstract can help you draw an interested audience to your research presentation.

When should you present your work?

Posters can be presented at almost any stage of a research project and are an *excellent* way to get feedback on work in-progress. Typically, students who have been doing research for 2 quarters are in a good position to present a poster. Discuss your research progress with your faculty and research mentors. They should assist you in the abstract writing process.

Where should you present your work?

There are many conferences that may be appropriate for you. Please visit the Conferences link on the URC-Sciences web site to learn about conferences that undergraduates commonly attend. Your faculty mentor or research advisor can give you some ideas on national meetings for you to attend. Many UCLA departments have their own poster sessions in May and June. Finally, all UCLA undergraduates are invited to participate annually in **Science Poster Day**, held May in Ackerman Grand Ballroom. Visit the URC-Sciences web site for more information on Science Poster Day.

What are Abstract Guidelines?

Once you have identified a meeting to participate in, you will need to check the Abstract Guidelines for that particular meeting. It is VERY important that you follow these guidelines, otherwise you risk having your abstract rejected.

- **Abstract deadline date** – These are usually very strict: an abstract received late will not be accepted
- **Word Restriction** – Most meetings have a word restriction (typically 200-250 words). Abstracts that exceed this word count will be cut off at the restricted number when published or NOT accepted
- **Format** – All meetings will require a specific format for an abstract, including specific margins, font and/or font size. They will also require a certain way to list the authors and to present their affiliations.

How do I write an abstract?

Your abstract should include the following information:

- Introductory sentence(s)
- Statement of hypothesis, purpose or question of study.
- General methods/procedures used.
- Primary result(s)
- Primary conclusion of the work
- General statement of the significance of the research

Before submitting your abstract, double check your grammar, run a spell check and a word count, and be sure to submit it by the deadline. Always print out a copy to read, as it is much easier to catch typos that don't involved misspelled words (e.g. *if* vs. *is*; both are words, so your spell check program will miss the difference).

Evaluating Abstracts:

The purpose of the abstract is to identify the basic context of a document so that the reader can decide whether he or she wants to read the document in its entirety. To determine whether you were successful, your abstract will be read by your peers in class and evaluated for clarity. Your peers will also evaluate whether they found your abstract interesting to read.

How to evaluate an abstract:

Your job: Write your comments in the margins. Make corrections where necessary. Suggest revisions to sentences.

Check for:

- (1) Grammar & spelling: If you find errors, make corrections.
- (2) Overlong and run-on sentences. Sentences should never be 3 lines long. If there is a long sentence, suggest a way to shorten it or to divide it into two sentences.
- (3) Clarity. Do you have a clear understanding as to what the project is about? Are there any terms you do not know or that have not been defined? Circle them to let the author know you don't know what they mean.
- (4) Does the abstract include:
 - Introductory sentence(s)
 - Statement of hypothesis, purpose or question of study.
 - General methods/procedures used.
 - Primary result(s)
 - Primary conclusion of the work
 - General statement of the significance of the research
- (5) Is it interesting? Does reading the abstract make you want to read the rest of the paper or see a poster on the topic. Write a note.
- (6) Do you think the author fulfilled all the requirements? Why? Write a note.