



Writing an Abstract

Office of Undergraduate Research

Purpose of presentation

This presentation is meant to introduce you to abstract-writing and provide an opportunity to start a draft of your abstract.

Use this to begin your abstract and then connect with your mentor about your draft.

Note: Discover UofSC abstracts must be reviewed and approved by a mentor prior to submission.

What is an abstract?

The abstract is a brief overview of your selected type of work. It is typically a condensed version of longer piece of writing that highlights the major points covered, while concisely describing the content and scope of the work.

What should an abstract tell the reader?

In one paragraph:

- WHAT you did
- WHY you did it
- HOW you did it
- WHAT you found
- WHAT it means



Discover UofSC
Exhibit Hall
Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

Sample Abstract Review

- o Use the “Sample Abstracts” handout and pick an abstract that is most similar to your experience
- o Can you identify the types of information in the abstract?
 - o WHAT you did
 - o WHY you did it
 - o HOW you did it
 - o WHAT you found
 - o WHAT it means

You may be wondering...

My project/research is still in progress so my results aren't ready to be shared, what do I do?

No problem! Do you have anticipated results? Share those. If not, focus on the other sections of abstract such as background, why and how.

Overall Style

- It is important to be concise
 - Say only what is essential, using no more words than necessary to convey the information
 - Check abstract requirements – many have word count limits (DofUSC = 350 word maximum)
- At the same time it is also important to be descriptive
 - Meaning: use active verbs

Make the abstract easy to read

- o Do not use abbreviations without first defining them.
- o Don't omit articles or other little words in an effort to save space.
- o Avoid jargon.
- o Write in the third person singular.
- o Use active verbs rather than passive verbs.
- o Use short sentences, but vary sentence structure so that the abstract doesn't sound choppy.
- o Use complete sentences.



Workshop Time

Timed Free-Write

Materials needed:

- Timer (phone, etc)
- Paper and pen or computer with blank document

Instructions:

- o Each slide has questions for research experiences or beyond the classroom activities. Pick the questions that most closely align with your experience.
- o Each slide has time indicated at the top. Set your timer.
- o In that time, write down as much as you can.
- o Do not worry about grammar, spelling, etc.
- o You may use lists/keywords, etc.
- o The key is to write and not stop.

Introduction (2 minutes)

RESEARCH

- o What is this project about?
- o Why is this project interesting or important?
- o Elaborate upon the rationale.
- o What is the scope of the project?
- o What was your hypothesis, what did you think you were going to find?
- o Is your topic newly discovered or has it been ignored in the past?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- o What is the background or overview of this activity?
- o Provide context for the experience.
- o Include your role/title and where the engagement took place (name of organization, location, any significant information about group or location)

Methods/Activity Description (2 minutes)

RESEARCH

- o What was your approach? Did you use sampling or experimentation, for example?
- o Briefly explain your procedure.
- o What sources did you use?
- o Are your methods new to your field?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- o What did you do? Provide enough detail so the reader has a picture of your experience.
- o Ex: Global learning: I lived here...I visited...I explored...I learned about...I was responsible for...
- o What were your tasks as part of your role in the experience?

Results/Motivation or Purpose (2 minutes)

RESEARCH

- o What did you find when you performed your experiment or work?
- o If your project is not complete, what do you think you will find?
- o Do you have data collected or effects observed?
- o Distinguish between fact and conjecture. If you are theorizing, be sure to state as such.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- o Why did you do it?
- o Describe why and when you got involved – interest/passion, encouragement from peer, staff/faculty mentor, or perhaps connection to major or future career choice?
- o If implementing a large project, what was the purpose? How did it contribute to a great need?

Discussion & Conclusion/ Reflection & Significance (3 minutes)

RESEARCH

- o Are your results consistent with your initial hypothesis? Why or why not?
- o What is your interpretation of what these results mean?
- o Why should others be interested in your findings?
- o What are the implications for future research?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- o What did you learn? Be specific.
- o How did this experience help you think in a different way?
- o What was the impact on you?
- o What do you want others to learn/know from your experience?

Review & Revise

- Read the abstract aloud: How does it sound? How does it flow?
- Revise to improve transitions.
- Eliminate any unnecessary information.
- Strive for unity, coherence and emphasis.
- Always have someone else review.
 - This is a requirement for Discover UofSC.

Title

- The title of the abstract should be the same as the title of the paper or project.
- The title should be descriptive.
- The title functions as a “hook.”
- It should attract and hold the interest of readers.
- Read the titles from past presentations:
 - Which ones would you be interested in attending?

Summary

- WHAT you did,
- WHY you did it,
- HOW you did it,
- WHAT you found, and
- WHAT it means.

Next Steps

- o Remember, your mentor is your best resource.
- o Your Discover UofSC abstract must be reviewed and approved by your mentor prior to submission.
- o Submit your abstract prior to the deadline.
- o Visit the [Discover UofSC website](#) for details, including deadlines and other information.