

## How to Write a Conference Abstract

1. **Follow the conference guidelines.** The “call for papers” will provide guidelines you should follow. One of the most important is word count, which is usually 250-300 words. Conference organizers must read through numerous submissions and excessively long abstracts may be disregarded. Your topic should also be relevant to the conference theme. Read the conference description and suggested topics carefully to determine how your idea might relate.
2. **Show how your paper relates to current research.** A successful conference abstract shows how you insert yourself into the scholarly conversation surrounding the topic. You will want to show that your paper is well researched and responds to or extends the work of other scholars in the field.
3. **Attract your reader’s interest.** Your abstract should make the reader want to know more. It should show serious academic research and also sound interesting, even to scholars not working on the same topic. You may take on a slightly more informal tone than research paper or journal abstracts: feel free to be creative and even use a brief anecdote to introduce the topic.
4. **Edit and proofread carefully.** After spending so much time on your research and abstract, you want to be taken seriously. Make sure your abstract is free from spelling and grammatical errors, take a close look at word choice, and cut out all superfluous language. This will make your final product clear and concise.

## What to Include in the Abstract

The abstract should be a clear, concise summary of your paper. This is a lot to achieve in 250 words, so every sentence must count. Abstracts should include:

1. The research question or problem and your objectives
2. The thesis
3. The significance of your research
4. Methods or research approach used
5. Results, conclusions, and comment

## Qualities of a Good Abstract

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (p. 26) suggests that good abstracts are written in a way that is accurate, non-evaluative, coherent and readable, and concise.

1. **Accurate:** Give your reader a clear idea of the purpose and content of your paper. Avoid adding anything extra, superfluous, or overly detailed.
2. **Non-evaluative:** Think of it as a report rather than a sales pitch. You don’t need to “sell” your paper or comment on it. Rather, give a clear summary of your work.
3. **Coherent and readable:** Use language that is clear and understandable. Use active voice rather than passive voice. ( e.g., *Participants took a survey* rather than *A survey was taken by participants*).
4. **Concise:** Don’t try to cover everything in your paper. Choose the four or five most important points of your work; these points can refer to concepts, findings, or implications. Use key words from your paper, especially words you think readers will use when doing electronic searches.

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