



# 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.