

UC DAVIS

HEALTH

Center for Nursing Science

How to write an abstract

Abstracts are summaries of presentations, posters, publications and research studies. The focus of all abstracts is not the same, but the goal of abstracting the highlights of the overall podium presentation, poster, publication, project, or research study are universal.

Why submit an abstract?

It is an opportunity to share your great work

- Professional development
- Showcase UC Davis Health
- Participate in a conference – not just attend
- Some organizations off-set expenses for presenters

Before You Begin

- Know important dates
- Make sure that your topic fits with the conference
- Take advantage of information and resources
- Carefully read instructions
 - Take time to obtain, review and understand the structure & function of the abstract you plan to write.
 - Note of any suggested “subheadings,” required font type and size; specific instructions related to length, number of words and any format rules.
 - Once you have identified the specific instructions for this abstract, be sure to use them. You are more likely to be successful in your abstract submission, publication or selection if you follow the guidelines and instructions provided.
- If possible, obtain and review the criteria or rubric the editors or reviewers will use in evaluating your abstract and use those, in addition to the required specifications, to guide your work.
- Remember, abstracts are expected to be a concise summary—usually limited to one page or less.

Structure of the Abstract

If the call for abstracts did not include a template of suggested or required subheadings be sure you systematically approach the sequence of the abstract content. Try these generic subheadings to provide structure for your abstract:

- **Background:** This should be no more than five sentences, explaining why this study or project is important and what it will add to the science and practice. Generally, references are not included in abstracts. Content in this section should relate directly to the purpose/aims/question.
- **Purpose/Aims/Research (or PICO) question:** It may help to begin with: “The purpose of this (study/project/investigation) is to...” or “The question guiding this (study/project/investigation) is...” or, “The aim of this (study/project/investigation) is....” Three sentences *at most* should cover this.
- **Design/Methods:** If this is a research study, include the design, the setting, the sample, the

measurement tools, and the analysis approach. If the abstract is for a project, include the setting, the composition of your team, the participants with whom you worked, your project intervention, and your evaluation strategy. This should be detailed, but brief. These should be appropriate to the purpose/aims/questions.

- **Results/Findings:** Limit this to the facts. If a research study, include final sample size and composition, simplified demographics, primary results. If a project, what was done and what did the evaluation show. This should flow directly from the methods and be consistent with the purpose/aims/questions.
- **Discussion:** Relate your results directly back to your purpose/aims/research (or PICO) question. Did you achieve your purpose, either in your research or project? If not, why not? How was your question answered? Is the answer what you expected? Why or why not? What were the major limitations of the study or project (every study/project has them, so don't leave this out).
- **Implications/Conclusions/Further study:** This may be folded into the discussion section, but address the practice/research/education implications of your study? Should nurses adopt this intervention? If more research is needed, what are the questions that should be addressed next?
- **Title:** While this is at the top of the page, you will often create this last!
- **Authors:** Be inclusive – add everyone who contributed. For clarification of who should be included as an author, see recommendations from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>). If not authors, you can still acknowledge those who supported your work in your poster or presentation.

Format Principles

Good abstracts are easy to read, clear and concise. The abstract provides a glimpse of your work and attention to detail. Proof read! Avoid grammatical errors and typos. Read your abstract out loud—how does it sound? Ask someone you trust and respect to read it and give you feedback. Double check any instructions or guidelines and confirm that your abstract reflects these specifications. Assure that the entire abstract concisely evolves from your stated purpose/aim/question. The background discussion should be narrowly focused; the methods must be right for the purpose/aim/question; and the discussion should use the same verbiage as found in the statement of purpose.

Confirm that you

- Followed the instructions
- Included headings *exactly as stated* in the instructions/template
- Used short, clear sentences; one idea per sentence
- Limited your abstract to the word/character count requirement
- Technically edited your work

Submit Your Abstract

Be sure to submit your abstract on or before any relevant deadline and to the correct website/address. Late or misaddressed abstracts are likely to be returned without review. Be sure to factor in time zones and possible technological glitches. Plan ahead!

Additional Resources

- Please feel free to contact the Center for Nursing Science (CenterforNursingScience@ucdavis365.onmicrosoft.com) for consultation and/or templates, if needed.
- Abstract writing reference:
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118702727.ch3/pdf>