TIPS ON WRITING AN ABSTRACT

Typically, an informative abstract answers the following questions in 150-400 words:

- Why did you undertake this study or project?
- What did you do and how?
- What did you find?
- What do your findings mean?

These are the basic components of an abstract in any discipline:

1) **Motivation/problem statement:** Why do we care about the problem? What previous research are you building on? What practical, scientific, scholarly, theoretical, or artistic gap is your research filling?

2) **Methods/procedure/approach:** What did you actually do to get your results? (e.g. analyzed three novels, completed a series of five oil paintings, interviewed 17 students)

3) **Results/findings/product:** As a result of completing the above procedure, what did you learn, invent, create, or discover?

4) **Conclusion/implications:** What are the larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem or gap identified in step 1?

However, it is important to note that the weight accorded to the different components can vary by discipline. Here are some tips on how to write:

- Since an abstract will nearly always be read along with the title, do not repeat or rephrase your title.
- Your abstract should be complete enough to stand on its own.
- Your readers expect you to summarize your purposes, methods, and main findings. Emphasize the different points of your study in proportion to the emphasis they receive in your poster.
- DO NOT discuss information in your abstract that is not in your presentation. This is very important and is a little like "truth in advertising." You do not want to give your reader the impression that your study covers information it does not actually contain.
- Avoid using the first person "I" or "we."
- Choose active verbs instead of passive ones (ex: use "the study tested" instead of "it was tested by the study" or "I tested in the study").
- Avoid, if possible, using trade names, acronyms, abbreviations, or symbols in your abstract that you will need to use valuable space to explain.
- Avoid evaluative language in your abstract; report your findings instead of praising or criticizing them.
- Use key words from the document to help indexers more accurately catalog your presentation for future reference.
- Be sensitive to the needs and knowledge of your audience. What might seem perfectly obvious to you after working on a research project may be a brand-new concept to your audience.

EXAMPLES OF ABSTRACTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

Community Dance Deconstructing Social Barriers Forged by Sectarian Violence of the Northern Irish Troubles: A Case Study of Toome and District Senior Citizen's Club Fortnightly Dance Event

In 1998, Northern Irish civil conflict came to a political end with the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement brought with it the challenge of realizing this political peace among the greater divided citizenry of Northern Ireland. In efforts to ease this process, Northern Irish Government allocated funds to projects designed to foster development of civic peace. The object of this study is to analyze if, why, and how one such dance project in Toome, Northern Ireland has or has not been successful in building constructive community relations in a divided post-conflict setting. Data was gathered through interviews in Northern Ireland with participants of the dance project under study, arts administrators responsible for development of this and similar projects, artists involved in related community-building work, and elected government officials responsible for project funding. Results determined the dance project successful in building constructive community relations in a post-conflict setting. Results identify elements principally responsible for this success as dancing itself, tea ceremonies between dances, allocation of operative responsibility to project participants, and government support for the project. Research is currently being analyzed the impact of additional factors on the project's success, particularly age of participants and location of project meetings. Further analysis of data and conceivably additional research concerning this network are necessary to determine the significance of this phenomenon. The research consequently provides a strong introduction to understanding dance's potential as a post-conflict reconciliation tool and invites further research to better understand its relevance in mediating contemporary sectarian divides.

Investigating the roles of mRNA in early *Xenopus* embryo development

As the development of an embryo proceeds, its cells become committed to specific fates and their developmental potentials are gradually limited. A cell's fate and potential is influenced by a variety of factors. Results from previous research suggest that transcription factors, proteins that activate the expression of specific genes, play a major role in dictating developmental stages and cell fate. This project examines when and where some of these transcription factors act and what causes their expression in *Xenopus* (South African clawed frog) embryos. In vitro transcribed mRNAs coding for the transcription factors gem, zic2, sox11, and foxD5 are injected into specific parts of the embryos along with a lineage tracer, beta-galactosidase. Then, the injected blastomeres are dissected from of the remaining cells of the embryos and cultured in simple salt medium until the embryo has developed enough to have an intact nervous system. These explants test whether the expression of the injected transcription factors repress, stimulate, or maintain the expression of neural specific transcription factors (zic1 and sox2) without interaction from other parts of the embryo. The expression of zic1 and sox2 is detected by in-situ hybridization using anti-sense RNA probes. The expression of these two neural genes in control and injected embryos is compared to make conclusions about the roles those injected mRNAs play in neural development. Results to date indicate that zic2 induces the expression of sox2 and zic1, whereas sox11 does not. Blastomere explants injected with gem and foxD5 are being created. This information will be important to understand how neural stem cells are created in the embryo, and be useful for experimental creation of neural stem cells.