

Tips on How to Write an Abstract

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Whether submitting an abstract for a Nursing Research Day poster or for a professional meeting, some basic steps can help you through the writing process. Using a structured format organizes your ideas and makes the abstract easier to read.

Before you start:

Know who your audience is and gear your abstract to them. After reading the instructions to authors, you may want to find previously accepted abstracts to see examples of what others have done. Be detailed yet concise to stay within the word limit. Use the active voice and third person. If you get writer's block, start with one sentence for each section.

Parts of a structured abstract:

The **Title** is the first chance to capture your readers' attention so make it interesting with a few key details describing your project.

The **Author** statement lists all significant contributors with their degrees.

The **Purpose** (*or Objective*) relates why you started the project and helps readers decide if they want to read more.

- Tell why this topic is of interest to you, your unit, MGH or the profession.
- State your hypothesis, research question or objective.

The **Background** (*or Significance, Scientific merit, Interpretation*) summarizes what is known about the topic and what the major issues are.

- Describe the results of your literature review and how they relate to your question.
- Include other sources of information or expert opinion.

The **Methodology** (*or Design, Implementation*) describes how you carried out your research or project. Often a chronological approach is taken.

- Give enough detail for readers to understand your project design.
- Include setting, population, sample size, selection criteria, and measurement tools.

The **Findings** (*or Outcome*) include what you found and conclusions you made.

- Briefly state significant findings or performance improvement outcomes.
- Include qualitative data, quantitative data, and any statistical analysis.

The **Implications** (*or Changes*) describe the impact of your study on practice, policy, research or education.

- Summarize in a few sentences any changes made or recommended.
- Suggest what the next step in research might be.

Final steps:

After you finish your draft, re-read your abstract looking at content, readability, spelling, and grammar. Ask colleagues and all contributing authors for their comments. After you make any needed revisions, submit your abstract. You're done!