

How to... write a great abstract

If you're thinking of submitting an abstract to the Annual Conference or a Focused Meeting, here are some guidelines to give you the best chance of it being accepted.

The abstract is the only information that session organisers have when deciding to accept your work for presentation as an offered oral or poster. If accepted, it will also be published in the conference abstract book – so think carefully about what you want to include.

Remember: fellow delegates will plan their conference on the basis of abstracts of interest, so it's important to lay your work out in a way that will encourage others to visit your poster or attend your talk while still remaining objective about the data.



STRUCTURE

Abstracts should be 200–250 words in length.

Background – This should be around two sentences summarising the scientific basis of your work.

Methods – This should be the second longest section of your abstract, outlining the methods used to achieve your results.

Results – This should take up the majority of your abstract, and detail your findings, which should be stated objectively and include specific reference to the data you have obtained.

Conclusion – This should be two sentences setting your results in context with the wider research area.

FROM THE ORGANISERS

Dr Geertje van Keulen
Prokaryotic Division

Vague abstracts lacking detail or abstracts that are too convoluted are the usual culprits when not selecting an abstract for an oral presentation.

Dr Kim Hardie
Prokaryotic Division

In a good abstract, the point of the research is clear; the fact that something has actually been discovered using a robust technique and an appreciation of subsequent applicability or extension for the work is evident.

TOP TIPS

- 1 Make sure your title is informative – this is your first chance to engage the reader.
- 2 Focus on the novel aspect of your research: why should you have the chance to present your work?
- 3 Be concise.
Use clear, scientific language.
- 4 Don't include figures in your abstract, instead refer to your data and describe statistical tests.

To find out more about abstract requirements, see www.microbiologysociety.org/conferences

You can find out more about the Society and the benefits of becoming a member at www.microbiologysociety.org/membership