# 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 <u>brief overview</u> of your selected type of work. It is typically a condensed version of longer piece of writing that <u>highlights the major points</u> covered, while concisely <u>describing the content and scope of the work</u>.

# What should an abstract tell the reader?

#### In one paragraph:

- WHAT you did
- **O** WHY you did it
- OHOW you did it
- WHAT you found
- **O** WHAT it means



Discover UofSC

Exhibit Hall

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

## Sample Abstract Review

- 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?
  - WHAT you did
  - WHY you did it
  - HOW you did it
  - WHAT you found
  - 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

- Do not use abbreviations without first defining them.
- O Don't omit articles or other little words in an effort to save space.
- Avoid jargon.
- Write in the third person singular.
- Use active verbs rather than passive verbs.
- Use short sentences, but vary sentence structure so that the abstract doesn't sound choppy.
- Use complete sentences.

# Workshop Time

**Timed Free-Write** 

### Materials needed:

- Timer (phone, etc)
- Paper and pen or computer with blank document

### Instructions:

- Each slide has questions for research experiences or beyond the classroom activities. Pick the questions that most closely align with your experience.
- Each slide has time indicated at the top. Set your timer.
- In that time, write down as much as you can.
- Do not worry about grammar, spelling, etc.
- You may use lists/keywords, etc.
- The key is to write and not stop.





## Introduction (2 minutes)

#### RESEARCH

- What is this project about?
- Why is this project interesting or important?
- Elaborate upon the rationale.
- What is the scope of the project?
- What was your hypothesis, what did you think you were going to find?
- Is your topic newly discovered or has it been ignored in the past?

- What is the background or overview of this activity?
- Provide context for the experience.
- 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

- What was your approach? Did you use sampling or experimentation, for example?
- Briefly explain your procedure.
- What sources did you use?
- Are your methods new to your field?

- What did you do? Provide enough detail so the reader has a picture of your experience.
- Ex: Global learning: I lived here...I visited...I explored...I learned about...I was responsible for...
- What were your tasks as part of your role in the experience?



# Results/Motivation or Purpose (2 minutes)

#### RESEARCH

- What did you find when you performed your experiment or work?
- If your project is not complete, what do you think you will find?
- O Do you have data collected or effects observed?
- Distinguish between fact and conjecture. If you are theorizing, be sure to state as such.

- Why did you do it?
- Describe why and when you got involved – interest/passion, encouragement from peer, staff/faculty mentor, or perhaps connection to major or future career choice?
- If implementing a large project, what was the purpose? How did it contribute to a great need?



#### RESEARCH

- Are your results consistent with your initial hypothesis? Why or why not?
- What is your interpretation of what these results mean?
- Why should others be interested in your findings?
- What are the implications for future research?

- What did you learn? Be specific.
- Mow did this experience help you think in a different way?
- What was the impact on you?
- What do you want others to learn/know from your experience?

### Review & Revise

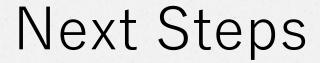
- Read the abstract aloud: How does it sound? How does it flow?
- Revise to improve transitions.
- Eliminate any unnecessary information.
- O Strive for unity, coherence and emphasis.
- Always have someone else review.
  - This is a requirement for Discover UofSC.

## 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

- OWHAT you did,
- WHY you did it,
- O HOW you did it,
- WHAT you found, and
- **O** WHAT it means.



- Property Remember, your mentor is your best resource.
- Your Discover UofSC abstract must be reviewed and approved by your mentor prior to submission.
- O Submit your abstract prior to the deadline.
- Visit the <u>Discover UofSC website</u> for details, including deadlines and other information.