

2012 ISA Water/Wastewater and Automatic Controls Symposium



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How to Write an Abstract

What is an “Abstract”?

An abstract is a stand-alone statement that briefly conveys the essential information of a proposed paper, presentation, or poster. It provides an overview of the motivation, objective, methods, results, and conclusions of the proposed work in a brief, non-repetitive style. It usually consists of 1-2 paragraphs and is about 250 words long.

What is it for?

For the WWAC Symposium, your Abstract is a “proposal” for what you are planning to present. The program committee reads your abstract and decides if your paper, poster and/or presentation idea is a good fit for the symposium. It is based on your abstract that your idea will be accepted or rejected by the program committee.

How to write an abstract

An abstract is a short summary of your completed research. If done well, it makes the reader want to learn more about your research.

These are the basic components of an abstract:

- 1) Motivation/problem statement:** Why do we care about the problem? What practical, scientific, theoretical or operational gap is your research filling?
- 2) Methods/procedure/approach:** What did you actually do to get your results? (e.g., technology evaluated, approaches tried, plant upgraded, processes investigated, etc.)
- 3) Results/findings/product:** As a result of completing the above procedure, what did you learn/invent/create?
- 4) Conclusion/implications:** What are the larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem/gap identified in step 1?

However, it's important to note that the weight accorded to the different components can vary by discipline. For models, try to find abstracts of research that is similar to your research.

(adapted from <http://research.berkeley.edu/ucday/abstract.html>)

How Long Does it Take to Write an Abstract

Most people spend between 1-2 hours writing an abstract. If you have written them before, an abstract can often be written in about 20 minutes. The key is to make sure you have a good idea about what your proposed presentation, paper or poster is going to be about – once you figure that out, writing the abstract is a fairly straight-forward exercise.

If you have not written an abstract before, it is often helpful to have someone who is unfamiliar with your work read over a draft; they will be able to tell you if it flows well and if you need to add/remove any details.

Abstract Writing Resources

Resources for writing effective abstracts:

- http://www.library.ubc.ca/scieng/chem121/module4/module4_1.html
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/specific-writing-assignments/abstracts#section-3>
- <http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_%28summary%29
- <http://research.berkeley.edu/ucday/abstract.html>
- http://employees.oneonta.edu/ebertjr/what_is_an_abstract.htm
- <http://www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter/abstracts.html>
- <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors/guides/write/abstracts.htm?part=1#2>

Questions

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the WWAC Symposium program chair.