

# How to Write a Conference Abstract

The following advice was originally excerpted (and edited) from [“How to write a scientific abstract in six easy steps”](#) and then revised over many years by the McNeil Group.

1. **Topic & Challenge Statements. First sentence:** What’s the topic and why is it important? Phrase it in a way that your reader will understand. The readers are likely chemists, so they know the basics, but will want to know specifically what topic your paper/presentation covers. **Second sentence:** State the problem you tackle. What’s the key research question? If you can’t summarize the gap/challenge in one key question, then you haven’t focused it down to the essential question yet. Keep working at this step until you have a single, concise (and understandable) question.
2. **Explain, in one sentence, how you tackled the research question.** What’s your big new idea or approach? What is the rationale behind it/why do you think it will solve this problem or fill this gap? This sentence should be general and not too detailed (yet).
3. **In one sentence, what did you actually do to answer/address the research question.** Did you run experiments? This is likely to be the longest sentence, but don’t overdo it - we’re still looking for a sentence that you could read aloud without having to stop for breath. Remember, the word ‘abstract’ means a summary of the main ideas with most of the detail left out.
4. **In one sentence, what are the most important results that came from the work?** Hint: These results should directly address that research question/gap you mentioned above. Don’t tell us about all the results, just the most significant one(s). As much as possible, provide some context – how do these results compare to others in the field?
5. **As a single sentence, what’s the key impact of your research?** Here we’re looking for a summary of the implications on the field/others. Why should other people care? What can they do with your research?