

How to Write a Conference Abstract

The following advice was excerpted (and edited) from [“How to write a scientific abstract in six easy steps.”](#)

1. **Introduction. In one sentence, what’s the topic?** Phrase it in a way that your reader will understand. The readers are others in your field, so they know the background work, but want to know specifically what topic your paper covers.
2. **State the problem you tackle.** What’s the key research question? Again, in one sentence. Remember, your first sentence introduced the overall topic, so now you can build on that, and focus on one key question within that topic. If you can’t summarize your presentation in one key question, then you don’t yet understand what you’re trying to present. Keep working at this step until you have a single, concise (and understandable) question.
3. **Summarize (in one sentence) why nobody else has adequately answered the research question yet.** The trick is *not* to try and cover all the various ways in which people have tried and failed; the trick is to explain that there’s this one particular approach that nobody else tried yet (hint: it’s the thing that your research does). But here you’re phrasing it in such a way that it’s clear it’s a gap in the literature. So use a phrase such as “previous work has failed to address...”.
4. **Explain, in one sentence, how you tackled the research question.** What’s your big new idea?
5. **In one sentence, how did you go about doing the research that follows from your big idea.** 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.
6. **As a single sentence, what’s the key impact of your research?** Here we’re not looking for the outcome of an experiment. We’re looking for a summary of the implications. What’s it all mean? Why should other people care? What can they do with your research?