American Heart Association®
Basic Cardiovascular Sciences

Best Practices for Writing Abstracts

The suggestions below are intended to provide guidance on abstract writing.

Title: To the extent the data permit, make the title dynamic and conclusive, rather than descriptive. For example, "Hypoxia Inhibits Kv1.5 Channels in Rat Pulmonary Artery Smooth Muscle Cells" is preferable to "Effects of Hypoxia on Kv1.5 Channels." Explicit titles denoting the findings should be used (not "Investigations of...," "Studies of...," etc.)

Structure: Abstracts should have the following identifiable sections: Introduction, Hypothesis, Methods, Results and Conclusions.

Category: Be sure to select the correct abstract category. Category selection determines which team grades the abstract. If you select the appropriate category, your abstract will be blindly graded by experts familiar with the science of the category.

Common Mistakes
1. Failure to state the hypothesis. We advise a formal statement such as, "We assessed the hypothesis that..."
2. Failure to state a conclusion. We encourage a final sentence that says: "In conclusion..."
3. Failure to state sample size. The reviewers want to assess the quality of the data – they need a mean SEM and a sample size.
4. Excessive use of abbreviations. All but the most standard abbreviations should be defined, and most abstracts should have less than 3 abbreviations.

Traps to Avoid
1. Typographical errors
2. References cited in the abstract
3. Not providing context or a statement of relevance that provides the rationale for your study.
4. Complex graphics. Simple line or bar graphs are most appropriate. Ensure the font size is adequately large on each axis to be visible. Check a printed version of the abstract before submitting.
5. Duplicative work

Remember: Make sure your abstract is clear, concise, and follows all rules. Show your abstract to a colleague prior to submission and modify accordingly. A fresh pair of eyes will help spot any errors and will ensure the final packaged is ready for submission.