Anatomy of an Abstract

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What is an Abstract?

• A mini paper
• One paragraph
• Describes what you are going to discuss, present or write about
• Gives reader and overview of the facts
• Source of new ideas
• Gets reader interested (ie: at a conference)
Anatomy of an Abstract

• Introduction
• Hypothesis/Goal/Problem
• Observations/Experiment/Methods
• Results (May not have these by the time you write your abstract)
• Discussion and Conclusion
Know Your Audience

• Play up the news
• Write with a person in mind
• What forum?
  – Scientific conference
  – School Symposium
  – Journal article
  – SACNAS or AMOS
Questions to Ask Yourself

• What problem did I solve?
• What goal did I reach?
• Why does it matter (to industry, science, etc)?
• How can my work be applied?
• How does my work fit in with the work of others?
• Can I support my claims?
• Is my result expected or is this a new way of thinking about the subject?
• What assumptions did I make?
What Must an Abstract Have?

• Adequate information on which to make a judgment.
  – Brief description
  – Results, observations and a conclusion.
  – Possible applications
How to Write It

1. Sketch out your findings
2. Separate main findings from supporting findings
3. Construct the main sentence (“hypothesis/goal/problem”)
4. Include supporting evidence (Methods/experiment/observations)
5. Add something interesting (maybe in conclusion or intro)
6. Tie everything together in logical order with good transition.
What an Abstract Doesn’t Include

- Description of secondary findings
- References
- Jargon and unexplained acronyms
- Too many words
- Lots of detail
Before Submitting Your Abstract

• Discuss each draft with your mentor and get their permission to submit
• Have others look over your work for errors and typos
• Get your institution’s approval (learn their policy as soon as you start work)
• Follow guidelines of the society who is requesting the abstract.
You will do GREAT!!!