Writing a Journal Abstract: Guidelines

1. Choosing the Article

Find an article on either an assigned subject, or on a subject that you have studied in class or in independent study/research. An abstract is a summary of the paper to let the readers know what the paper is about, which techniques have been used, what the results and conclusions are without having to read the whole article. In order to do that, you will need to read this article very carefully and determine what the relevant information is, which techniques have been used, what the results are and which conclusions have been reached. An abstract is really an analysis of a paper, project, technique, etc., and not necessarily a criticism. For our purposes it will be necessary to read and summarize the entire paper.

2. Style

- Your name – upper right hand corner
- Title of the paper reviewed, reference to the journal, date, volume, pages, etc. – at top, centered
- Abstracts should not exceed two pages, double-spaced and typewritten. Normally an abstract should be written in less than 300 words (see attached instructions for the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research).
- Underline – genus and species of organism, foreign words (E. coli, et al., viz., etc.).
- All abstracts should be written from the perspective of the authors and in an passive style. For scientific papers “It was done according to the following procedures…” is preferred over “I/We did…”. You should strive to write a “tight” abstract, that is, one that does not contain unnecessary verbiage.
- Your audience should be a group of scientists-to-be at your level of understanding. You should provide necessary background in the introduction, and write in a way that your colleagues in the class would understand and appreciate your logic.
- You should always write a rough draft and then revise it. It may take several drafts to make a good critique. You should label each draft clearly as a DRAFT and turn them in with the final abstract.
- Attach photocopies of the article and all references, if any, to the back of your paper.

3. Helpful Hints

- Your choice of paper on which to base your abstract is the first and most important step. Choose something in an area, and using techniques, that you have as much knowledge of as possible. You may choose to summarize a technical, experimental or review paper.
- Your logic is the second most important aspect: be certain that you logically present the ideas and concepts of the authors in your abstract. If you use any additional references, attach them to the back of your abstract.
- Finally, since this is a training exercise in professional communication, be certain that you carefully construct and proofread your paper. Avoid jargon and do not include any unsubstantiated statements
From: The Journal for Bone and Mineral Research

Guidelines to Authors

Each manuscript should start with an abstract of 300 words or less. It should describe the:

- Area and reason for the study
- Approach taken including sample size aspects
- Overall result
- General significance of the findings

All information should be accessible to a non-expert audience.

Abstract
The abstract should be in a structured format under the headings:

- Introduction
- Methods (including sample size and statistical approaches)
- Results and Conclusions

- The entire Abstract should not exceed more than 300 words.
- The abstract should be self-explanatory without reference to the text.
- Five key words should be listed at the bottom of the abstract page.
- The layout of the Abstract should be similar to the following:

  Exposure to data in a structured or repetitive format may have distinct communication outcomes. Several formats were evaluated by preference and 7-day recall in a randomized cross-over study in 90 individuals. The simplified format was better understood by 75 + 5% and remembered by 65 + 5%. This study supports a structured format for scientific papers.

- Introduction: The number of pages in the average JBMR article has increased from 6-8 pages to 10 or more over the past several years. This may be the result of repetitive presentation of data and could impact on comprehensibility.

- Materials and Methods: This section should carefully describe the methods and materials used including sample size and statistical approaches. It should include details for unique experiments and appropriate references for commonly used techniques.

- Results: This section should succinctly state the results and not draw conclusions all through the Results. Finally many papers did not make any real conclusions but merely repeated the major findings without referring to how these addressed the reason for the study as raised in the Introduction.

- Conclusions: The Introduction should be clear and concise and not pre-empt the final data. The Methods should provide what is required in a clear way without excessive unnecessary detail. The sources of materials should be shown by …………………… study findings. For example, there are many possible improvements in the presentation and clarity of papers being submitted and published in the JBMR.