

Baiting the Hook: Writing Powerful Titles and Compelling Abstracts



Overview

- What makes a good title and a good abstract
- Key elements
- Tips for writing

Purpose of the Title/Abstract

- Title/abstract summarizes your work
- Usually the last thing you write
- Fine-tuned for your audience
- Allows the reader to judge whether it would serve his or her purposes to read the entire manuscript

General Tips – Title and Abstract

- Parts of your paper most people will see
 - First (and sometimes only) parts of a paper that can be viewed by everyone unless paper is open access
- Be specific and concise
- Key elements should be included in both
 - Use keywords for indexing – facilitates the paper making it to your target audience
- Best way to get people interested
 - People judge by the title whether to read the abstract
 - The reading of the abstract will influence whether the entire paper will be read

Tips for Writing a Title

- Keep short
- Address main point or content of the study **and** be specific
- Include model organism
- Avoid extra or "waste words," abbreviations, chemical formulas
- Make easy to understand; use familiar words (no jargon)
- Check for correct syntax (word order/sentence structure)

Titles - Be Specific

- Bacterial responses to stress
- Oxidative stress response of *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6893 due to UV-B exposure

Titles – Avoid Syntax Errors

- Clinical *Acinetobacter baumannii* Isolates for Biofilm
- Biofilm Formation by Clinical Isolates of *Acinetobacter baumannii*

Generating Titles

- Brainstorm and write down as many titles as you can think of in a few minutes
- Compose and revise

Abstract

- Self-contained summary of work
- Emphasizes key results and significance
- Succinct, clear and accurate
 - Follow defined word limit of guidelines to authors

Abstract Tips

- Usually written last and in past tense
- Start drafting the abstract by choosing your best lines from the manuscript
- Be logical in structuring your abstract
- References usually excluded
- Review and revise

Planning Your Abstract

- Know the guidelines for your venue
 - Follow the guidelines/instructions for length, format and content exactly
 - Double check before submission
- Consider your audience

Parts of an Abstract

- Background
- Hypothesis
- Model system
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

Background

- ~2 sentences
- Introduces general topic
- Introduces importance of topic

Hypothesis

- 2 sentences maximum
- Describes the question being investigated or purpose of the investigation
- State hypothesis succinctly and clearly

Model System

- Introduce model system being used
- Include scientific name and strain
 - Good for indexing and attracting those readers interested in the system

Methods

- ~2 sentences
- Introduce general methods used
 - Good for indexing, etc.
- Only provide specific details if introducing a new or innovative method(s)

Results

- ~2 sentences
- Summarize key results that are specific to the study

Conclusions

- Summarize the significance and impact of the findings
- Be specific and place your results into a broader context
- "The Big Finish"



Final Tips

- Use the active voice
- If abbreviations used, be sure to define them the first time that they are mentioned
- Review and revise



Concluding Remarks

- Presenting research - as important as doing research
- Continue to develop technical writing skills