**Office of Research Student Resources: How to Write an Abstract**

* How to write an abstract for an academic conference.

**What is an abstract?**

An abstract is a brief summary of a research project. The abstract allows readers to quickly understand the basic purpose and major ideas of a paper, helping the reader to determine whether or not they are interested in reading the entire paper. In the case of the URSS, the abstract serves as a tool of advertising, grasping the audience and judge's attention.

An abstract should tell the reader the following:

* What is your paper about?
* Why should we care about your topic?
* What method did you use to do your research?
* What did you learn?
* What are the implications?

**Why write an abstract?**

An Abstract not only help readers decide whether or not they would like to continue reviewing the full content of your project, but also can assist your faculty advisor/mentor to ensure that your research is going smoothly. For the purpose of a conference, it helps the organizers and judges decide

**What qualities should be present in a good abstract?**

To write a good abstract, follow these steps:

* Start by rereading your paper - pretend you have never seen it before and see if you can highlight the key points.
* Look specifically at the main parts of your paper - can you identify the purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions, and recommendations?
* After you have reviewed the paper, sit down and write a draft abstract - don't just copy and paste sentences. Fell free to SUMMARIZE the information in a new way.
* Now revise your rough draft so that it reads smoothly and isn't too wordy. Check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
* Print it out and read it one more time.

**Examples of Strong Abstracts from Previous Symposiums**

Digital distraction is the constant and repeated action of engagement with digital media technology devices by a user. The use of digital mediums is part of the majority of individuals' daily routine, and while the effects and consequences of these technologies are not blatantly obvious, they are deeply influential. This paper examines the social and neurological effects of digital distraction on the communication patterns of users through comparisons of the neurological diseases, ADHD, Autism and Anterograde Amnesia. Each disease carries with it a neurological and social deficiency that mirrors those of the digitally distracted individual. Each disease is examined for the best possible diagnosis for this technological deficit. Based on the comparisons, the paper concludes with a discussion of practices to break digital media's grasp for the digitally distracted and offers means by which we can learn to minimize distractions for better communication with others in a digitally mediated world. *- Mark Bagnato, Cami Hernandez and Amy Kerlin*

Although the society isolated within the walls of a prison is radically different from the outside world, it is often forgotten that it is populated by human beings who are trying to preserve their identities under the restrictions of incarceration. In the same way that general society creates roles and social structures, inmates in a prison maintain their own culture and roles. In a systematic, depersonalizing institution such as a prison, inmates must create and occupy these roles to avoid losing themselves. Since gender and sexuality are major components of identity, it makes sense that some form of gendered sexual behavior might occur in prison. The isolated environment of prison somewhat necessitates sexual fluidity as an adaptive measure. Sexual relationships in prison are not only about sexual desire, but have undertones of dominance or submission between those involved, creating systems of power. This uneven dynamic is an expression of gender roles that transfer from the outside world into the prison environment. Although inmates are the same sex, they perform heteronormative gender behaviors, calling into question the homosexual nature of these acts. This paper will explore prison sexuality as a phenomenon occurring in the isolated society of a prison, and in the context of the larger society in which prisons exist. The goal is to analyze the various behaviors that inmates display in an environment where sexual fluidity is commonplace, and to discover how sexual fluidity manifests itself as both an adaptive measure and as a reflection of societal standards. - *Amanda Buchheit*

**Using Understandable Language**

 When writing an abstract, you should always consider who your audience is. Oftentimes, especially at Duquesne's Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Symposium, readers are from different disciplines. Because of this and the chance of cross-disciplinary collaboration in the future, it is crucial that the language of your abstract is readable to a non-specialist.

* Simplify your language. To ensure that you have done this, you can have a friend from another major read your abstract and point out things that could be clarified.
* Eliminate jargon. This is not the time to show off your technical vocabulary. If a technical term is unavoidable, add a non-technical synonym to help readers outside of your field understand.
* Omit needless words such as redundant modifiers and excessive detail.
* Focus on what the readers need to know, rather than using expressions such as "it is my opinion" and "I have concluded."

**Before you submit your abstract to the URSS:**

* Make sure it is under 250 words.
* Make sure the language is understandable to a non-specialist.
* Have your faculty advisor work with you and approve your abstract before submitting online.
* Only one abstract per person is allowed through the form.