

WRITING AN ABSTRACT

When answering a call for papers a number of factors need to be kept in mind to ensure that your abstract has a good chance of being accepted.

- Ensure that your ideas are well thought out and follow a logical, coherent flow:
 - state the issue to be discussed
 - give a brief background to the issue
 - brief description of what you are doing about it
 - implications/outcomes: why is what you've done important?
- Ensure that the abstract relates to the conference theme:
 - in a 'real' and not contrived way: if it doesn't fit then don't submit
 - an interesting and catchy title helps:
 - but make sure it's not too 'clever' or obscure

Ensure that practical aspects of the abstract comply with requirements:

- it meets or is under the specified word length
- is typed in the specified font type, size
- spacing and setting out are correct
- if no guidelines are given then a standard format is usually:
 - 200-250 words
 - Times 12pt font
 - 1.5 line spacing and centred on the page
- Limit amount of references cited in abstract:
 - use only if essential to support your argument
 - detailed references can be covered in the resulting presentation/paper
- Look at past abstracts/conference papers to pick up the tone and style of that particular organisation's conferences
- Run your abstract past someone familiar with both the topic you wish to present and the conference style: such as a university lecturer, work colleague, member of professional society, someone who has presented before at the conference
- Submit on or before the due date and in the required way:
 - electronically, via e-mail, is usually preferred
 - ensure computer compatibility of documents (especially in converting Macintosh to IBM formats)
 - saving in 'Rich Text Format' in Word is better (*.rtf)
 - not all are able to access documents in html formats easily – stick to established word processing programs such as Word
- Ensure you include your name, title, organisation and contact details, including phone, fax, street address and e-mail
- Finally, remember that your abstract serves two purposes:
 - to interest and intrigue the committee so they will select it
 - to introduce/outline your topic for the conference handbook – so it needs to stand alone as a record of your presentation

Websites of recent conferences with examples of well-written abstracts can be found at:

<http://comedu.canberra.edu.au/conference/arece/Conference/2002/TopicList.html>

The Association for Australian Research in Early Childhood Education, 2002 Conference

<http://www.aare.edu.au/index.htm>

Australian Association for Research in Education, 2001 Conference

http://www.archimuse.com/conferences/SPEAKERS_LIST.HTML

Museums and the Web International Conference: Abstracts and papers online from conferences held since 1997