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Conference Proposals and Abstracts

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by Writing Center Staff

- [Ten Ways to Start a consulting Practice - Q & A](#)

Following are some guidelines for formulating and presenting a conference proposal or abstract. To view some sample conference proposals--two individual abstracts and one proposal for a full panel--please visit our sample conference proposals page.

- [Links](#)

- [Services](#)

Make a Good First Impression

- [Thirty-five Ways to Consult Your Way Through Grad School](#)

- [Topical Guides](#)

Meet the deadline. Late submissions suggest poor planning and preparation.

- [Critical Thinking and Graduate Education](#)

Prepare a clear, easy to read manuscript. Clean, laser printed copies presented within the manuscript conventions of your discipline make your abstract accessible and easy to read. If you must FAX or e-mail your abstract in order to meet the deadline, follow with hard copy via U.S. mail.

- [Fellowship and Grant Proposal Guide](#)

Make it clear you have written this abstract especially for this conference. Do not send the entire paper, a section of paper, or anything that does not summarize what your paper actually says. If you are basing your abstract/proposal on a course paper or dissertation chapter, retool it to fit the theme and scope of the conference.

- [Qualifying Exam Guide](#)

Content of Your Proposal or Abstract

- [Writing Theses and Dissertations](#)

- [Writing in Specific Fields](#)

Know your audience. What do they already know about your topic? Do they need any background information to understand your thesis? Do you need to define special terms? These questions are especially important for an interdisciplinary conference, as scholars from various fields will evaluate your proposal/abstract.

Address the theme of the conference. Look carefully at the "Call for Papers/Proposals/Abstracts." Clearly show how your paper fits into the theme of the conference. Incorporate buzzwords from the list of acceptable topics in the call. If the conference is sponsored by a journal, look at a copy of the journal for a statement of its philosophy (usually inside the front cover). The statement serves as a code for the scholarly approach preferred by the editors.

Writing Tips

Get to the point. State your thesis decisively; the shorter the proposal/abstract, the sooner you need to let your audience know your main idea.

Use your own words. Emphasize your own ideas, not the work of others. Quote or paraphrase authorities sparingly, if you must.

Stick to the page limit. One hundred words means one hundred words, one page means one page.

Clarity, clarity, clarity. Eliminate nominalizations, wordiness and jargon; use concrete and specific language. Ask a friend or a Writing Center consultant to read your proposal/abstract. If your reader cannot understand a sentence immediately, rewrite it. Conference organizers read hundreds of proposals/abstracts. Do not make them work too hard to understand yours.

An Alternative Approach

Try putting together a panel. It's easier to get a panel accepted into a conference than an individual paper (pre-formed panels save the committee work). Your panel should have a clear theme connecting all of the participants' papers. In your panel proposal/abstract, state the theme, then describe how the various papers address the theme.