



Tips for Constructing Your Scholarly Activity Abstract

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The following elements can be considered when constructing your abstract:

Proposal Title : [Ensure a full title is given]

Sections (total length 500-1000 words):

A) Rationale/Background: This section should clearly explain the clinical concern or issue, what is understood and what is NOT understood. A rationale should give solid support for why this missing clinical knowledge is of import and speaks directly to the value/need for the study. The rationale must provide a clear foundation for the hypotheses/goals. If you are conducting a systematic review, be clear in the rationale why a review would be of utility.

B) Goals and Objectives/Aims: What is the overall larger intent of the project? This should be stated as a goal. What are the more specific intentions of the proposal? These should be stated as individual objectives or aims, and are not the same as the overall goal.

1. Goal: It is a broad statement that defines what you plan to do in a project. It gives an idea to the reader of what problem you intend to address.
2. Objective: These are detailed statements describing the ways through which you intend to achieve the goal.

C) Hypothesis – An empirical research hypothesis posits your research expectation – your prediction of the outcome of the research. It is expected to be amenable to statistical evaluation, and it is based on the foundational information provided in your rationale. ***It is very strongly recommended that your proposal have a singular primary hypothesis.*** Secondary and exploratory hypotheses may be included, with the understanding that any expectations beyond the primary hypothesis will exert additional statistical pressure and raise the requirement on both the quantity and specificity of the raw data to be obtained.

Note, however, that some types of research projects (e.g., qualitative, educational, QI) will not be expected to posit a hypothesis.

D) Study Design – Is this a cross-sectional study? Longitudinal? Within group? Between Groups? Naturalistic? Observational? Chart review? A systematic review?



E) Methodology:

- The methods section should clearly and explicitly detail where the data will come from (e.g. patient characteristics [i.e. sex/gender, age, ethnicity, education level, diagnoses, medication histories, medical histories etc], the full parameters for including/excluding papers in your review, the participants' locale, method of recruitment, number of participants/groups to be included). The measurement tools and/or assessments must be fully detailed. The data may include clinical data (results from laboratory assays, extracted data from medical charts, diagnostic information) and/or clinical ratings, questionnaires and surveys.
- The methods section should have a specific subsection to describe data analysis. Will you include descriptive statistics? Will you compare pre/post data? Will you compare between groups? Do you have an estimation of effect size to help you determine how many participants you need for statistical purposes? If your data come from surveys and ratings, how will you manage these data to allow for counting or evaluating phenomena?

Feasibility: A statement regarding the likelihood of obtaining data and completing the data analysis should be provided. If this study requires human ethics approval, has that been obtained? *Any study that requires access to clinical databases, chart information or participant involvement must receive clinical ethics approval prior to data collection.*

As proof of due diligence, it would be desirable to include a brief statement on potential caveats and how you intend to manage these potential hurdles.

Summary: A summary statement of the clinical implications and value of the proposal should be included.

Lastly – some hints for good scientific writing:

1. Use only as many words as necessary to express a concept. Parsimony is good. Make the language precise AND concise. *If your sentence is beyond 40 words, it is likely to be unclear and difficult to read.* Avoid writing out long lists. If you need to list 6 or more items, try to present them in a table or some other summary format.
2. Unless it is general public knowledge, statements of facts should be supported by valid citations (typically peer-reviewed articles). Citing Wikipedia is insufficient.
3. Link your sentences by concepts, not by filler words. Avoid “In as much as”, “On the other hand”, “Furthermore”, “In light of”, “As we all know”, “Therefore”, “Thus” and “Nonetheless”.
4. Write in ACTIVE voice:

EXAMPLE



The active voice describes a sentence where the subject performs the action stated by the verb. It follows a clear subject + verb + object construct that's easy to read. In fact, sentences constructed in the active voice add impact to your writing.



Active: Beautiful giraffes roam the savannah.

Passive: The savannah is roamed by beautiful giraffes.

With passive voice, the subject is acted upon by the verb. It makes for a murky, roundabout sentence; you can be more straightforward with active voice. As such, there are many ways to change the passive voice to the active voice in your sentences.

Additional recommended reading:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020)