



Emerging Researchers in Ageing Australia

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ERA 2012 Conference  
Building a Career in Ageing Beyond the PhD

How to write a conference abstract

## Before you begin...

First, pick a conference relevant to your research – e.g. ERA!

- Some people submit abstracts on topics with little or no relevance to the conference theme and so get refused. The larger the conference, the more strict they will be about relevance.

Study the conference call for papers carefully

- Identify any theme or topic that you need to connect to – e.g. *Making an impact*
- Identify style rules (font type and size, margins, heading types etc), word limits, deadlines, submission process etc
- Identify other requirements e.g. key words, presenter bio etc
- You may also want to look at examples from previous conferences to get a sense of what was selected previously.
- Now you are ready to start preparing your abstract!

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## Basic structure of an abstract

This will vary depending on the conference, discipline etc, but usually covers what you did, why and how you did it, what you found and what this means, e.g.:

- Title – Usually 10-12 words that captures the topic
- Introduction or background – Why your research is important
- Aims or objectives – the purpose of your research
- Methods – How the question is being addressed - design, data collection, analytic approach
- Findings or results – what you discovered (not always possible here.....)
- Implications, summary and conclusion – explain the significance and value of the findings

Following this basic structure makes it easy for the reviewers to assess and hopefully accept your paper.

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## General rules

- Understand what an abstract is – a marketing tool to capture the interest of the reader & entice them to attend your presentation or read your paper.
- So make it interesting – be bold in your opening statement about why your work is important, new etc. But be realistic as well – don't overstate it.
- Keep to the word limit
  - Don't be too short – use the space you have well
  - Don't be too long or you will either be rejected outright or asked to resubmit
  - Don't over do any section to the detriment of other sections
- Keep it relevant

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## General rules – cont.

- Make sure it reads as a unified document which flows from start to finish
- Know your audience – avoid jargon if it is a generalist audience like here at ERA
- If the abstract is to be indexed online in a searchable database then make sure you include key terms likely to be used in a search query.
- Avoid using acronyms, abbreviations or symbols in the abstract as you don't have the space to define them.
- Use consistent tense throughout- usually past tense

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## After the first draft...

- Draft, revise, revise....
- Use the word limits as a discipline – get rid of unnecessary text
- Seek feedback from one or more people willing to give honest criticism. You may understand what you have written but others may not. Always good to seek feedback from non-experts (family members?)
- Give yourself time – not the night before!
- Come up with a good title – often this will be the last step once the rest of the abstract is written.
- Meet the submission deadline (use calendar reminders, post-it notes – whatever works).

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Useful resources...

- First and foremost, use the conference website!
- Other resources used in preparing this presentation
  - <http://academic-conferences.org/abstract-guidelines.htm>
  - <http://lizgloyn.wordpress.com/2011/06/06/how-to-write-a-conference-abstract/>
  - [http://hgso.curtin.edu.au/pdf/Abstract\\_Submission\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://hgso.curtin.edu.au/pdf/Abstract_Submission_Guidelines.pdf)
  - [http://www.phcris.org.au/phplib/filedownload.php?file=/elib/lib/downloaded\\_files/publications/pdfs/phcris\\_pub\\_8375.pdf](http://www.phcris.org.au/phplib/filedownload.php?file=/elib/lib/downloaded_files/publications/pdfs/phcris_pub_8375.pdf)
  - <http://www.jephc.com/uploads/990248WW.pdf>

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Any questions...

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