

# Top 10 Hints for Abstract Writing



Gustaf Olsson <sup>1</sup>, Xiaoyuan Zhang <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lund University, Sweden, [gustaf.olsson@iea.lth.se](mailto:gustaf.olsson@iea.lth.se)

<sup>2</sup> Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, [zhangxiaoyuan@tsinghua.edu.cn](mailto:zhangxiaoyuan@tsinghua.edu.cn)

There are two main types of abstracts: short abstracts are usually 100 to 300 words, and extended abstracts are usually 1 to 3 pages. Here are top 10 hints for abstract writing which are helpful for both types of abstracts.

## 1. The title: summarize your paper in one sentence

Spend time on it and try more than one alternative. Avoid a long title; you may use a subtitle. As part of the preparation, summarize your paper in one sentence. This will help you both to prepare the title and to write a clear abstract. It will help the reader to grasp the content. Discuss your title and the short sentence with colleagues. You can also practice describing your work to a colleague in just one minute.

## 2. Stand in the readers' shoes

If you want to write an attractive abstract, be a reader first. Think about: what kinds of messages in an abstract encourage or attract people to read the paper. Is the reader a specialist, a practicing engineer or a non-specialist that wish to get an overview of the results? This should govern the style of the abstract and the paper.

## 3. Outline three central points of your work

Outline the most important and attractive information of your paper so that you can have clear and deep insights of your work. Then, present your central points in the abstract to your reader.

## 4. Literature review and research gaps are important

Before introducing your work in abstract, give a brief review on what is known

before and what remains to be solved, to help the readers to understand the background and research gaps.

#### **5. The key points of your contributions**

Aiming to solve the proposed research gaps, you need to tell the readers what you have done and how you did it. Write down your contributions and methods briefly. Present a short motivation why the work has been done. What are the drivers?

#### **6. What are the results?**

After introducing your contributions, you need to present your results and conclusions. Point out the most important and most attractive results to demonstrate what you have achieved. These represent the main part of the abstract.

#### **7. Value of your work**

Summarize which problem you have solved or what you have learnt in your work and tell your readers. Show the significance of your work. This will motivate that the paper is meaningful and worth reading.

#### **8. What remains to be solved in the future?**

This is an optional part but if there are some unanswered questions, point them out. It can also be an outlook of your work for future studies.

#### **9. Complete your story**

A complete abstract ought to convey information including: what you know and what remains to be solved, what you have done, how you did it, what you have achieved, what the value of your work is and what remains to be solved in the future.

#### **10. Ask non-expert readers to read it**

Once you complete your abstract draft, find non-expert readers to see whether they can figure out what you have done, how you made it, what you have achieved and the value of your work. Do they get the message? Revise according to their advice.

The authors are Advisory and Programme Committee members of the [International Young Water Professionals Conference](#). Do you have more questions: email us at [iwaywpcconference@iwahq.org](mailto:iwaywpcconference@iwahq.org) and we will see if we can get the experts to answer the questions for you.