Biology 3987
Biology Seminar

How To Prepare An Abstract

The Abstract is a brief, clear summary of the information in a document such as a journal article, or a paper presented at a scientific meeting or seminar. The abstract is probably the last thing that you write before actually presenting your seminar. A well-prepared abstract enables the reader to identify the basic content quickly and accurately, to determine its relevance to his/her interests or purpose and then to decide whether they want to listen to the presentation in its entirety. An abstract must be included on your seminar posting.

The abstract should:
• State the principle objectives, the scope of the investigation or the reason for addressing the topic (the “what” and “why”).
• Describe very briefly the methodology employed or the approach to the problem or topic (the “how” or “where”).
• Summarize the results that were found.
• State the principal conclusions.

An abstract should not exceed 250 words and should be fully self-contained; that is, must make perfect sense to someone not familiar with the topic. It should be typed as a single paragraph and must contain complete sentences with correct grammar and spelling. It is usually written in the passive voice:

“This study was undertaken to determine the wavelengths of light that are most effective…”
“Rate was determined at ……”
“Light of 550 nm produced no detectable ….”

The abstract should not give information or conclusions that are not in the paper or presentation. It should contain no bibliographic information, figures or references. Omit abbreviations and acronyms.

1. After L. Shannon, 2007