

Questions for evaluating abstracts

From the UW-Madison BACTER Institute (www.bacter.wisc.edu), Aug. 2009

Writing an effective abstract can be a challenge; how do you convey everything you want readers to know about your study in so few words? An excellent way to learn this skill is to scrutinize not only the scientific content of a number of abstracts, but also the writing. Once you find a couple of examples you like, try to emulate them.

Here are some questions to get you started with your analysis:

The parts

Does the abstract clearly and succinctly state the problem being addressed?

Is the approach to the study clear?

Is there enough background information to understand the study and its significance, without going overboard?

Are the key findings clearly stated?

Is data offered in support of the authors' statements about their findings?

Does the final sentence indicate the significance of the work?

Is the abstract as concise as it can be, without leaving out anything critical?

Is the abstract free of writing errors?

Overall:

Is there a clear "take-home" message?

Did the abstract capture your interest?

Would you want to hear a talk or read an entire paper based on this abstract?

Is there anything that would improve the abstract?

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