

How to Write an Abstract



Research publications and conferences are key opportunities for disseminating the insights, learnings, and practices of your Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPP) project. When pursuing either opportunity, you will need to write an abstract—a 6-7 sentence (or 200-250 word) summary of the key points in your research paper or conference presentation or poster.

This resource provides guidance to help you craft well-written abstracts. A good abstract succinctly summarizes your work and prepares people to follow the detailed information, analyses, and arguments in your full paper or presentation. Think of an abstract as the information you would want someone to walk away with after a 3-minute conversation.

CONTEXT

Before writing your abstract:

- **Choose the publication or conference you'll submit your abstract to.** For help identifying journals, check out the RHNTC's [Journal Ideas for Dissemination](#).
- **Review the publication or conference's guidelines on length, content, and style.** These guidelines vary from organization to organization.
- **Note the deadline for submitting your abstract.**
- **Clarify the specific audience you're writing for.** If you're writing for people with subject matter expertise, you can use more technical language and include less context.
- **Identify the most important information to include.** You'll cover the details in your full paper or presentation.

FORMAT

Research publication abstract

Your research publication abstract will emphasize your contribution to the field—for example, your research, intervention, or innovation—and why it's important.

Abstracts submitted for research publications typically follow this format:

1. Broad context about the topic and/or description of the problem
2. What is known about the topic and the gap your contribution seeks to fill
3. Description of your contribution, approach, and/or research methods
4. Results of your contribution
5. Implications on the field or future areas of work

Example:

Many schools lack curriculum time in which to implement evidence-based sexual and reproductive health programming. Safety 4 Youth is an evidence-based intervention known to reduce sexual risk-taking behavior and STI diagnoses among young people. While this intervention has previously been implemented in community-based clinics, it has never before been implemented in school-based health centers. This paper discusses the implementation of Safety 4 Youth in 10 public high school- and middle school-based health centers in Capital City and describes initial evaluation results of implementing Safety 4 Youth in this new setting. The research team collected data through training evaluations, clinic implementation plans, clinic staff interviews, and observations of clinic implementation. Findings suggest that school and clinic leadership are supportive of the implementation of Safety 4 Youth in their schools. Schools with strong relationships between school staff and health center staff recruited more participants and, despite individualized facilitator training, the quality of program delivery varied across facilitators and schools. Based on these findings, the implementation team will explore opportunities for successful recruitment and consistent program delivery across schools.

Conference abstract

Conference abstracts tend to follow the same general format as research publication abstracts, but they vary in a few ways.

Conference abstracts often:

- **Have a catchy yet descriptive title.** Your title will help conference attendees decide if they want to attend your talk or visit your poster.
- **Provide more context and explain the contribution's importance and implications in more detail.** This is because they tend to be evaluated without an accompanying paper and reviewed by a less specialized audience. (But remember: Always follow the length guidelines of the conference you're submitting to.)
- **Cite the work of others in the field,** to prove the author's knowledge of the field and show how their contribution builds on existing work.
- **Discuss expected results rather than actual results,** if the research or intervention/innovation hasn't been completed yet. You can later include final results in the actual conference presentation.

Source: Resources – Comparing Research Abstracts with Conference Abstracts. (2023). Northwestern University. <https://www.writing.northwestern.edu/comparing-research-abstracts-with-conference-abstracts>

This publication was supported by the Office of Population Affairs (Grant TPSAH000006). The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.