

Supporting Knowledge Transfer for OTs

Tips for Writing a Successful Abstract for a Presentation

Presenting at a professional conference is an excellent way to share your knowledge, skills and expertise or to use the platform to share your innovative ideas about OT in Ontario while contributing to knowledge translation and adoption of best practices and the professional development of others. It's also an excellent opportunity to develop your speaking and presentation skills, to gather feedback on your work and to develop networks of others who share an interest in your work or interests.

Consider submitting an abstract (proposal) to present at an upcoming conference in your field – we think you'll find it an exciting opportunity!

Writing an abstract may not come easy to some, so we hope you'll find these tips useful!

What is an Abstract?

An Abstract is a short document that is intended to capture the interest of a potential attendee to your presentation, workshop or poster presentation. In a sense it is the marketing document for your presentation that must engage the reader by telling them what your presentation is about and why they should attend. Usually there are word limits of 250 to 500 words so it is intended to be succinct, informative and engaging.

Preparing to write an abstract...

Start with asking yourself some questions to clarify what you want to present and why and how you feel it is relevant to the audience the conference is likely to attract. For example:

- i. What do I have to present?
- ii. Is this relevant to the audience this conference targets? Is my topic timely, provocative, strategic, important?
- iii. Is this the right forum for my content? Developing an abstract and if accepted thereafter the presentation or workshop can be a lot of work....you want to make sure this will be a good fit for both your audience and for you.

- iv. Does my topic/content relate to the theme of the conference? Not every conference has a theme but when they do you can assume that relevance to the theme will be one factor considered for abstract selection.
- v. What can I present in the timeframes allowed - for example, if limited to 20 minutes can meaningful key messages be communicated, if options for length of presentation exist what is the optimal timeframe for your content and participant discussion?
- vi. Note the deadline for abstract submission. Typically these are non-negotiable. Plan your preparation timelines to ensure you aren't rushed to meet the deadline and have time to solicit some editorial feedback if desired.

From idea to writing...

- When sitting down to write the abstract, remember to keep your audience in mind and to be clear and concise (select only what you need to make a point) and engaging!
- **Consider the following content...**
 - **Description:** a description of the research, project, experience, service delivery model, innovative idea etc.
 - **Lessons learned:** conclusions/outcomes/learnings and implications of the research, program or project that you perceive important for the audience.
 - **Practical Applications:** how might the audience be able to implement strategies; bringing your learning into their every day practice?
 - **Next steps:** possible next steps for implementation, further research, program change, etc.? How might this research/idea/project impact OT practice in Ontario?
- **Choose a title that will sell!**
 - Sometimes the title comes after the abstract's been written... a nice way to tie it all together... but do what works for you!
 - Your title should be simple, descriptive and engaging – it is your mini-advertisement!
 - Limit your title to no more than 12 words.
 - Include the idea, the work and the context in the title.
 - You don't need to give away your lessons learned or recommendations in the title, but you might hint that you're going to give them in the presentation.
 - Consider that the title needs to help reviewers categorize your presentation.
- **Consider having peers review your abstract prior to submitting**
 - Ask one peer to review content and another to review grammar, spelling, punctuation and flow.

How is an abstract selected?

Abstract reviewing is no easy task! Usually a team of reviewers (sometimes your peers) carefully reviews each abstract that is submitted. Those accepted to a conference are considered based on many factors, including:

- the value of the topic to the conference
- the link to the theme of the conference
- the quality of the work
- the clarity of the abstract
- the novelty of the idea or research which is being presented

See OSOT's review criteria used to review abstracts submitted for Conference workshops as an example below.

Here's to successful abstracts and sharing the good work you are doing!

OSOT Conference Workshop Abstract Review

During the abstract selection process the OSOT Conference Planning Team considers the following 11 points as a guide. We strongly recommend that you ensure your abstract satisfies these points.

1. Does the abstract capture the interest of a potential conference/workshop attendee?
2. Is the abstract well written in terms of language, grammar, etc.?
3. Does the abstract engage the reader by telling them what the workshop/poster is about and why they should attend?
4. Does the abstract title describe the subject being written about? Is it catchy?
5. Does the abstract make a clear statement of the topic of the paper and the research question if appropriate?
6. If presenting research findings, does the abstract say how the research was/is being undertaken?
7. Does the abstract indicate the value of the material to be presented for OTs and to whom in particular it will be of use?

8. Does the abstract sufficiently relate the focus of the workshop to the theme of the Conference?
9. Is the proposed format of the workshop clear? Does the proposed format appear appropriate and practical for the timeframe, venue, etc.
10. Are the speaker(s) skills profiled to attract participants?
11. Does the abstract conform to the word limit of 300 to 500 words?

Happy Writing!