

Concretizing the Abstract, TAA Conference 2021

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Sample Abstracts

Example 1:

Policy in higher education suggests that curriculum should be more responsive to economist arguments than was the case in the past. Although some guidance has been given to how to develop more work-integrated curricula, little attention has been given to interactions in meetings between workplace and academic representatives in which issues of curriculum development are discussed. As such, there appears to be a gap in current curriculum theory. The author suggests that such interactions may be fruitfully examined using concepts derived from studies in the sociology of science and organizational dynamics. Such analyses may contribute to understanding what conditions enable productive interactions, which may be the development of hybrid objects and languages which speak to both groupings.

Example 2:

The authors investigated whether students who selectively volunteer for a study of prison life possess dispositions associated with behavior abusively. Students were recruited for a psychological study of prison life using a virtually identical newspaper ad as used in the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE: Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973) or for a psychological study, an identical ad minus the words of prison life. Volunteers for the prison study scored significantly higher on measures of the abuse-related dispositions of aggressiveness, authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and social dominance and lower on empathy and altruism, two qualities inversely relative to aggressive abuse...Implications for interpreting the abusiveness of American military guards at Abu Ghraib Prison also are discussed.

Additional Resources

Writer's Diet – Writing assessment developed by Helen Sword

<https://writersdiet.com/>

Rhetorical Moves for Writing Abstracts – Deconstructing the abstract into 5 moves, by Mark Pedretti

<https://blog.taaonline.net/2018/08/5-rhetorical-moves-for-writing-abstracts/>

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/writing-abstracts/>

6 Easy Steps for Writing Abstracts – Question approach by Steve Easterbrook

<http://www.easterbrook.ca/steve/2010/01/how-to-write-a-scientific-abstract-in-six-easy-steps/>

Bonus: A meta-example

1. The Topic
2. The Problem being solved
3. Why Previous Research has not yet solved it
4. How you tackled the problem
5. How you did the research itself
6. Why we care

(1) The first sentence of an abstract should clearly introduce the topic of the paper so that readers can relate it to other work they are familiar with. (2) However, an analysis of abstracts across a range of fields show that few follow this advice, nor do they take the opportunity to summarize previous work in their second sentence. (3) A central issue is the lack of structure in standard advice on abstract writing, so most authors don't realize the third sentence should point out the deficiencies of this existing research. (4) To solve this problem, we describe a technique that structures the entire abstract around a set of six sentences, each of which has a specific role, so that by the end of the first four sentences you have introduced the idea fully. (5) This structure then allows you to use the fifth sentence to elaborate a little on the research, explain how it works, and talk about the various ways that you have applied it, for example to teach generations of new graduate students how to write clearly. (6) This technique is helpful because it clarifies your thinking and leads to a final sentence that summarizes why your research matters.