

Preparing a good ACSP abstract: Advice for Ph.D. students

While perhaps no abstract is guaranteed of acceptance at a conference, there are some good rules of thumb you should follow in preparing yours. Here are a few items to consider:

- 1) **Follow directions.** This point may seem obvious, but it is most critical. Each year ACSP receives abstracts that are too long, too short, sent directly to the track chair, lacking references, late, etc. Perhaps the best thing you can do to ensure your abstract will receive a favorable review is to look carefully (and look again!) at the instructions provided. Then follow them.
- 2) **Ground your proposal in the relevant literature, theory, etc.** The reviewer needs to understand clearly what the origins of your research are. No research exists in a vacuum.
- 3) **Indicate why your research is important.** Please make sure your abstract conveys what academic planners have to learn from your work.
- 4) **Explain your approach.** An exhaustive methodology is neither required nor desired. However, it is important to understand approach(es) you are taking to answer your research question(s).
- 5) **Be forthcoming about your status.** If your work is in progress, please explain that as specifically as you can. If you cannot possibly collect and analyze the data needed to accomplish what your abstract promises, do not make that promise. While some Ph.D. students may present their work twice before completing their doctoral degrees, many present only in their last year. You would rather be remembered as the person who has done a fantastic job of presenting a compelling dissertation as opposed to the person who had some interesting but only half-baked ideas.
- 6) **Show your abstract to others before you submit it.** If your advisor is willing to review it for you, great. Fellow students and others outside your field can also be a helpful set of eyes to identify areas that are unclear, grammatical mistakes, typos, etc.
- 7) **When in doubt, ask a track chair.** Track chairs are happy to help you decide whether to submit your abstract to their track or whether it might be a better fit elsewhere. Please allow track chairs adequate time (at least a week) to respond to your queries.
- 8) **If at first you don't succeed...** No one wants to be "rejected" from a conference. But, space limitations are an unfortunate reality. Track chairs want to help you get to the conference, as they realize how important it is to your job search and eventual career. If they tell you your work seems premature one year, please consider that an invitation to resubmit. If you can attend the conference even as a non-presenter, it can be tremendously helpful to seeing the types of work and papers that are typical of ACSP.