

## Tips for Preparing Abstracts

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Kudos on your decision to submit an abstract to the Permanent Scientific Programme Committee! Participation in the NZAOT Scientific Program at conference is an opportunity to share knowledge about an issue or topic you are passionate about, disseminate research results, share knowledge that will advance practice, or ask probing questions to stimulate debate and dialogue.

Preparing an abstract is an important task that can be intimidating for the first-time presenter. Abstract preparation is a skill that requires practice, and patience. The following tips will help to guide you through the process.

### First task – Deciding the focus and presentation format

The first step in preparing an abstract is reflecting on how your idea for a research project, discussion of a practice issue, or educational session fits with the theme and goals of the NZAOT conference. An important tool for any abstract writer is feedback from someone who has experience writing or reviewing abstracts. Think about who you can include in your network of colleagues, co-workers, mentors and other professionals to provide feedback and help you develop your ideas. Another way to gain information is to read through abstracts in peer-reviewed journals such as the *New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Consider how the authors presented their ideas and look for ideas that you could use to develop your abstract.

The following is a list of factors to consider before you begin writing the abstract. It is helpful to present your idea to interested colleagues for discussion and refinement.

- **Why would your idea be of interest to an occupational therapy audience?** Is it novel, or related to a current “hot topic”? Is it controversial? Will it change current practice?
- **How does your idea relate to the conference theme**, as presented in the “Call for Abstracts”?
- **What factors do the panel of reviewers consider when rating the abstracts submitted for conference as outlined in the “Abstract Scoring Sheet”?**
- **What type of session will be most appropriate for the topic?** CAOT offers 3 types of formats, as outlined in the “Abstract Submission Guidelines”:

- 1. Paper presentation** – is presented formally using a PowerPoint to an audience in a classroom type of setting. This format works well when the presenter speaks to the key points and adds context, analysis and explanation. The formal presentation is followed by an opportunity for the audience to ask questions.
- 2. Poster presentation** – is a visual format that lends itself well to the presentation of quantitative information. Presentation of the poster at conference will provide opportunity for informal discussion with interested attendees. Most workplaces will have

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someone with expertise in preparing posters, or you may need to go to a local print shop for guidance re: costs and time lines.

3. **Workshop** – is best when the goal is audience engagement and participation. The presenter(s) speak for about 15 to 20 minutes, followed by a 15 to 20 minute facilitated session in which the audience engages in a small group discussion or activity, typically followed by large group feedback and discussion.
4. **Panel discussion** – is best when the goal is to introduce the audience to a range of diverse perspectives on a professional, social or political issue. The panel can have up to 5 speakers. The issue should be introduced, followed by each presenter speaking from their perspective for about 5-10 minutes. The panel member's views would typically be followed by a summary and opportunity for audience questions and discussion for about 10-15 minutes.

## Second task – Preparing the abstract

- Review the “[Call for Abstracts](#)” and the “[Abstract Submission Guidelines](#)”. It is critical to follow the submission guidelines. You must stay within the word limit, use the headings as outlined, and submit by the indicated deadline.
- Useful references can be found on websites. You may find the following links useful:
  - [www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/abstracts.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/abstracts.html)
  - [www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html](http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html)
  - [www.languages.ait.ac.th/el21abst.htm](http://www.languages.ait.ac.th/el21abst.htm)
- Prepare a draft abstract well in advance of the deadline. Leave it for a while, review and revise, then circulate to your colleagues for review. Feedback from peers is especially important during this step. You want every sentence to be clear and add value to the abstract. However, you also want your abstract to be interesting and to capture your enthusiasm for the topic. If you plan an extended session, be sure to indicate the method of facilitation in your abstract.
- Ask a peer or colleague for feedback. Ideally, having feedback throughout the process is an excellent advantage, but it is especially important to have someone read your abstract critically and look for areas for improvement. Having someone who is familiar with writing abstracts review your draft can help you clarify what should fall under each heading and ensure that you have used precise, clear language and active voice throughout your abstract.

### • **Submit by the deadline.**

If you have suggestions or feedback on the information provided in this document, please send an e-mail to Valerie Wright-St Clair at [vwright@aut.ac.nz](mailto:vwright@aut.ac.nz)

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