

## 2021 AMA Research Challenge: How to prepare an abstract

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Watch the AMA Research Challenge video on "How to prepare an abstract," with steps on how to prepare and successfully submit an abstract for the challenge.

### Featured speaker and topic

David Harris, radiation oncology resident at the University of Alabama at Birmingham discusses the steps on how to submit an abstract for the research challenge.

#### Speaker

- David Harris, radiation oncology resident

### Transcript

Hello. My name is David Harris and I'm a radiation oncology resident at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I currently serve as a member of the Research Challenge Advisory Committee and as vice chair of the Resident and Fellow Committee on Scientific Research with the AMA. Since medical school and during medical school, I have served in a variety of leadership roles with the AMA and with other professional organizations. I am strongly committed to bringing you the best experience possible related to research.

#### How to prepare an abstract

The goal of this video is to discuss how to prepare your abstract for the symposium.

- The first step and probably most important is to check the rules and regulations to confirm key components. These include the word count, templates and other information related to

the rules.

The AMA specifically requires that all abstracts must be submitted using the approved template available on the challenge website. Following the rules is very important as someone who has reviewed these several times before I can say that not following the format of the rules is an easy way to get your abstract disqualified.

Abstracts are to be submitted without pictures or graphs. Now, it's great if you have these, but you want to save those for your presentation or for your poster. The abstract is going to be just text.

The abstract must not exceed 350 words in length. Now, this is not as many words as you think. It's actually just kind of half a page typed on Microsoft Word. The word count does not include the author's name, co-author's names, the abstract title, page numbering or any ancillary entrant information. It's just the body of the abstract.

## Follow the rules

Now, following the rules when preparing these abstracts is really important. I've reviewed these abstracts for this symposium before in the past and I can say upfront that by not following the rules having really, really obvious formatting errors is an easy way to get your abstract disqualified. So please make sure you follow the rules closely and don't veer off. Abstracts must include a title and author names. The abstract must have a title, or we will not consider it.

## 4 key components

Now moving on to preparing the abstract body itself. There are going to be four key components of the abstract and they are background, methods, results, and conclusion. Now we're going to go through each of these step-by-step.

1. **So let's start with background.** This is where you introduce the reader to your research topic. What practical or theoretical problem does the research respond to? What research question did you aim to answer? Basically in just a few sentences you want to introduce the reader to your topic and kind of highlight to them what question you're trying to answer with your investigative work.
2. **Now moving on to the methods.** The methods is a very straightforward section. You're just going to straightforwardly describe what actions you took to complete the research project. It should only be a few sentences and it should be just very dry matter of fact, "This is what I did." Don't need much fluff there, just state what you did.
3. **Moving on to the results.** This is where you highlight your key findings from the research. You'll want to talk about what you discovered in terms of the research. This is a good place to list some statistics. You may want to list some P values if related to, kind of convey if there's statistical significance that may not apply to your research. But the key point here is with results

you want to list what you found. Now, it's very important with the results section that you don't really interpret the results. So don't list kind of, "Oh, this is what I thought about the results." Just list what you found. You're going to want to save your interpretation for later. So just straightforward list what you discovered. Some of you may have done really extensive research and it may not be possible for you to list absolutely all of your results in the results section. But in that case, you just want to highlight the key findings. You can go into more detail in your poster or in your presentation, but here you want to list just the key findings.

4. **Moving on to conclusion.** This is where you summarize what you found and this is where you interpret the results. This is where you come back to the background with the knowledge of the results and state, "This is what we found from the research. This is what we think this means." This is where you interpret and draw conclusions. This is also a good spot to discuss potential limitations in your research, potential biases you may have, maybe you think there could be some selection bias that you maybe didn't get the best possible sample, or maybe you think this may not apply to every country in the world, say, it's only relevant to within the U.S. if you're looking at outcomes research. But that's where you may want to go into that as well. And you may also want to go into future direction of your research. So say, you answered your question but now this brings about another question that could generate another research project. You'll have to stay within the word limit. So you're limited in what you can say, but the key point here is this is where you essentially summarize what you found in your results and what you think it means bringing it back to the background question.

## Proofing abstracts before submission

Always stay concise in the abstract. You don't want to be too wordy. This is not like writing a poem or a novel. It's writing a research abstract. For guidance you may want to look at some available abstracts online in papers that have been written in your field. Good examples of abstract is a good way to get started to know in general how to write these. Lastly, always proofread and revise your abstract. Make sure you are submitting using the approved template found on the research challenge website. And oftentimes it's good to get a friend or family member to read over it as well to make sure you haven't missed something.

So in the end, the AMA is committed to providing medical students, residents, fellows and international medical graduates, a best in class opportunity to build and showcase research, and engage with the AMA beyond traditional policy and advocacy opportunities. I hope these tips have been valuable. Best of luck to you as you prepare your abstract. We are looking forward to reviewing those and thank you so much for your interest in the AMA Research Symposium.

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**Disclaimer:** The viewpoints expressed in this video are those of the participants and/or do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.