

# ACES ABSTRACTS: GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

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# What is ACES?

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- Annual Celebration of Excellence by Students
  - Research
  - Creative Activities
- Entire day (Thursday, March 24)
- University-wide
  - Not college-specific
  - Not department-specific

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**ACES** THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON  
THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE BY STUDENTS

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March 24, 2011

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# What makes ACES challenging?



- The Audience
  - Intelligent
  - Well-educated
  - Successful
  - Invested in Student Success
  - Diverse

Smart people who aren't specialists  
in your particular discipline

# Connecting with the ACES Audience

- ❑ ~~Dumb down / water down your material~~
- ❑ Make your abstract & presentation **accessible**
  - ❑ “easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use”
  - ❑ “easy to approach, enter, use, or understand”
    - <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/accessible>
- ❑ How does one enhance accessibility?
  - ❑ Clarity
  - ❑ Connection
  - ❑ Little (or no) jargon

# So... What about the Abstract?



## □ Background

(from the website)

- Submission  $\neq$  acceptance
- Limit = 250 words  
(Excessive texts will be truncated)
- Submissions are subject to subsequent editing
- Deadline: Thursday, February 10, 2011, 5:00 PM
- Notification: Tuesday, March 1, 2011

# Abstract Review Committee



- 12 faculty members
- Diverse disciplines
- Random assignment
- Shared assumptions

(we'll get to these later)

# Stepping Back: What is an abstract?



- Summary *of the presentation*
- Sample *of your talents*
- Request *to be included in the event*
- Commitment *to participate if selected*

# ... And from the Organizers' View?

- Summary *of the presentation*
- Sample *of the author's talents*
- Request *for inclusion*
- Commitment *to participate*
- Raw Material *for building a program*
- Potential Investment
- Risk



**Minimize Risk!**

# A Point to Ponder




- “Many abstracts are rejected because they omit crucial information rather than because of errors in what they include.”

Linguistic Society of America’s  
“Abstract Guidelines and Specifications”

<http://lsadc.org/info/meet-ann10-abguide.cfm>

# Past Abstract Rejections from ACES

- Insubstantial
- “Promissory Note”
- Unprofessional
- Overly specialized
  - ▣ Too technical
  - ▣ Excessive jargon
  - ▣ Lack of attention to audience



What potential risks do each of these issues raise?

# What does the Committee Seek?



1. A clear statement of the central issue
  - *What's it about?*
2. A description of results, including reference to what was investigated (data, texts, etc.)
  - *What did you find?*
3. An interpretation of results
  - *What does it mean?*
4. A note on significance
  - *Why does it matter?*

Adapted from <https://www.uta.edu/aces/submissions/>

# Key Linguistic Property of Abstracts



- Propositionally Dense
  - ▣ A large number of clauses occupy a small space
  - ▣ Each clause contributes new information
- Redundancy undermines Propositional Density

# Eliminate Redundancy

Make every  
word count!

- Macro-level
  - ▣ Each concept should appear once
  - ▣ Order of presentation matters
- Micro-level
  - ▣ Replace long phrases with shorter equivalents
    - *In the apparent unlikelihood that any subject were to experience physical discomfort akin to seasickness, ...*
    - *CHANGE TO: If a subject becomes ill, ...*

## **BUT!**

- Do not sacrifice transition words; they build logical arguments
  - *however, conversely, consequently, additionally, ...*

# To Recap...



- Your ACES abstract should be

- Accessible
- Propositionally Dense
- Complete , i.e., includes...

1. A clear statement of the central issue
2. A description of results, including reference to what was investigated (data, texts, etc.)
3. An interpretation of results
4. A note on significance

# Questions and Discussion

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