WRITING AN ABSTRACT

When answering a call for papers a number of factors need to be kept in mind to ensure that your abstract has a good chance of being accepted.

- Ensure that your ideas are well thought out and follow a logical, coherent flow:
  - state the issue to be discussed
  - give a brief background to the issue
  - brief description of what you are doing about it
  - implications/outcomes: why is what you’ve done important?

- Ensure that the abstract relates to the conference theme:
  - in a ‘real’ and not contrived way: if it doesn’t fit then don’t submit
  - an interesting and catchy title helps:
    - but make sure it’s not too ‘clever’ or obscure

Ensure that practical aspects of the abstract comply with requirements:
- it meets or is under the specified word length
- is typed in the specified font type, size
- spacing and setting out are correct
- if no guidelines are given then a standard format is usually:
  - 200-250 words
  - Times 12pt font
  - 1.5 line spacing and centred on the page

- Limit amount of references cited in abstract:
  - use only if essential to support your argument
  - detailed references can be covered in the resulting presentation/paper

- Look at past abstracts/conference papers to pick up the tone and style of that particular organisation’s conferences

- Run your abstract past someone familiar with both the topic you wish to present and the conference style: such as a university lecturer, work colleague, member of professional society, someone who has presented before at the conference

- Submit on or before the due date and in the required way:
  - electronically, via e-mail, is usually preferred
  - ensure computer compatibility of documents (especially in converting Macintosh to IBM formats)
  - saving in ‘Rich Text Format’ in Word is better (*.rtf)
  - not all are able to access documents in html formats easily – stick to established word processing programs such as Word

- Ensure you include your name, title, organisation and contact details, including phone, fax, street address and e-mail

- Finally, remember that your abstract serves two purposes:
  - to interest and intrigue the committee so they will select it
  - to introduce/outline your topic for the conference handbook – so it needs to stand alone as a record of your presentation

Websites of recent conferences with examples of well-written abstracts can be found at:

The Association for Australian Research in Early Childhood Education, 2002 Conference

Australian Association for Research in Education, 2001 Conference

http://www.archimuse.com/conferences/SPEAKERS_LIST.HTML
Museums and the Web International Conference: Abstracts and papers online from conferences held since 1997

Lynda Kelly, Head, Australian Museum Audience Research Centre, 1 February, 2002