

EOSC212: Feedback (from all students who did the exercise) about abstract writing. October 27, 2009

To make use of these first two pages, read them once using colour to highlight BOTH positive comments and recommendations that you think are particularly relevant for you. Then make a note to yourself with 2 or 3 aspects you will focus upon when you do your next abstract. It should all take only 20 minutes or so. (Some spelling and other minor editing has been done to these comments.)

Feedback #1

1. InSAR's usefulness is mainly in its ability to detect motion remotely. Some sentences contain superfluous details. Sentence structure was confusing at times
2. Give more context to your abstract by starting off with a strong introductory statement that is clearly related to the contents of the abstract. Give more details on the process of how GPS works and the studies done from the article. Try to be more specific in your writing as opposed to broad statements.
3. The abstract lacked well summarized components. The abstract really didn't mention the different parts of the article as much as it could have.
4. This abstract lacked succinctness and attention to detail (I would give both categories a 2 or 3), which made it very hard to understand whether the other components were even present. I had to read the paper over and over in order to try to understand what was being said, and I am still very confused about much of the paper. The writing was very choppy and many of the sentences lacked proper grammar.
5. Nicely formatted and nicely summarized. Very concise and contains most of the information required. Could talk more about how SRI works and touch more on the methods and results. Introduction is good.
6. The reader has to know what your topic is! -You summarized well, but all four components could have used some detail work, it was really vague. The abstract didn't flow, you were all over the place at the start.
7. Excellent abstract. I might want to be a bit more concise, precise words rather than long sentences.
8. Don't try and describe the methods in so much detail, they only make up a fifth of your mark according to the rubric, and it's impossible to summarise the science of an entire paper in a couple of sentences. The middle sentences end up being long and confusing. Also try and make your writing more succinct.
9. I would give a bit more detail into the topic you are discussing, such as what exactly INSAR does rather than just discussing the data. I feel that you could use some better language or more detail when referring to this data as well! Other than that it was nicely written!
10. There are two sentences in a row that begin with 'The data collected...' which came across as quite repetitive. A bit more detail could have been paid to the technical side of the paper.
11. It was good how you clearly stated in the final sentence what the implications of the "new technique of observing movements" were, but within the entire article it wasn't mentioned once that it is GPS you are referring to. Also the concepts about the US Defense withholding data from the public by implementing errors was not touched upon nor the ways civilian scientists got around them.
12. The grammar in the second sentence is confusing, and the abstract include the researcher's name frequently. The results section could have been more specific. You can use actual important data here. Sentence structure varied from good to average, which resulted in a disturbance of flow. Each idea seemed very separate from the preceding and proceeding ideas.
13. The methods discussed in the abstract were not well summarized. It would have been better to include accurate numbers and units in the methods. More detail in the results and discussion would have also been beneficial.
14. This was a good abstract for the InSar article, following most of the guidelines for a good abstract (from rubric).
15. DON'T USE the 1st person! It wasn't really your team that is forecasting earthquakes. Ending needs revision, I don't like the last sentence, why will insar never replace GPS; Because you need both for accuracy;...
16. The thesis is not clearly stated. There is a sentence describing how hard it was to develop INSAR which does not really serve a purpose.
17. Good short and concise sentences. Talk more about how SRI works and give some results. A few grammatical errors. Nice flow.
18. Well summarized, I got a good overview of what happened, but it was almost too broad. There were some details left out, such as the Doppler shift, and there was not a lot of background information. Also there was one or two sentences that didn't make sense.
19. I was confused about the actual topic of the article after first reading it; the introduction seems very incoherent and the phrase InSAR is only mention in the last sentence. I believe you need to focus on the topic at hand and give more of an analysis of the data and models, instead of focusing on the background.
20. Perhaps a little more time should be taken when writing this abstract to minimize on the grammatical errors present. Also, a little more detailed description of discussion and results could be inputted.
21. I would suggest that you identify the model being used in the first sentence so the reader knows what you are talking about, rather than placing it in the last sentence. Also try to keep the methods and results more general mentioning several examples rather than focusing on just one example.
22. Don't use words that expand sentences unnecessarily. Be more concise and identify the theme/problem in hand and talk about it more...

23. The abstract could be much shorter, focus a little less on specific examples. The method was fairly clear and well stated. Watch out for grammar and syntax (run-on sentences, logical progression).
24. Excellent intro Excellent methods Excellent Results and Discussion Good length. Lacking a bit of detail. The abstract flowed and was easy to understand. May have been a bit too broad and lacking detail.

Feedback #2

1. Compact format was a bonus except in the methods section where a little more detail could have been added. intro sentence did not grab attention
2. Good contextualizing and background info. It could even be more concise for the sake of length. Communicated the data and the results very clearly, good job!
3. The abstract summarized the article well although it was a little too long and there was some information that wasn't necessary.
4. The abstract did a good/ excellent job of including the introduction components and the results/ discussion. However, the methods components lacked details and proper grammar, which caused the middle of the abstract to be much lower quality writing. Overall, the abstract did a good job of portraying what the article was about, however, the attention to detail was about a 4 and needed some revision.
5. Proof read after completion because some minimal grammatical errors. Try to be more succinct, some sentences a bit too long.
6. Maturely written, very specific and easy to read. -A lot of info on method, not so much on Data, Results, or Discussion. -You made it clear what you were talking about, that may seem like an obvious thing to do, but I appreciate it. -Correct length.
7. Definitely read the article properly. Do not try to explain something you don't fully understand. Otherwise, I liked the structure and most elements for a good abstract are present.
8. You do a good job of summarising and being succinct. However the Results and Discussion section of the rubric seems to be lacking slightly-- the discussion portion is there, but not really the results. You seem to focus a lot on the introduction which could perhaps be briefer.
9. I feel as though this was a very well written abstract, all aspects of the rubric are covered especially the clear and concise writing. All concepts are discussed and a very good overview is given of GPS.
10. Introduction was clear, excellent. Discussion/conclusion is a little brief.
11. Abstract seems succinct and well put together as a whole. A bit too much focus on the US Defense's actions and civilians response when topics such as the mechanisms behind the GPS workings are also discussed in the article.
12. While this abstract describes how the process works, there is no results section, and no reference to what the specific study was doing. It was very general, and the wording could have been much more scientific and compact. The writing is not indicative of a scholarly article, and may attract the wrong audience to reading this article.
13. There was a good amount of detail in the methods component. The abstract was succinct.
14. Abstract focused too much on the history of GPS, not the GPS itself or how it is being used in science today, or what makes it worse or better than other positioning methods/systems. Also for the ending, the future of GPS science isn't the future of the Department of Defense, civilian scientists have already made GPS more accurate from the original version released by the Government.
15. The motivation behind developing GPS was not clearly stated. Well written but found one grammatical mistake, the start of the second sentence.
16. Good detail with components included from each section. Try to keep sentences short and succinct. Nice length.
17. Included lots of details, which was good, good job on the background information, but focused too much on the details some information was left out, radar interferometry was not mentioned. Also some sentences did not make sense.
18. I liked this abstract because it is succinct and tackles the issues at hand. The Method section is excellent, with all aspects clearly summarised. The conclusion needs work though, you focussed on the availability of GPS, which I believe is a side issue. Finishing with how GPS has been applied and how it may be used in the future, would have been appropriate.
19. Beware of Run-ons. Being a little more concise and a little less wordy will eliminate these grammatical errors and create a easy to ready, accurate abstract.
20. Overall it was pretty good but sometimes it was not clear what you were trying to say for example when you were saying that the GPS could give the position within a meter then saying that "it could do this, if it hadn't been restricted and secured to the US Department of Defense's liking." Try to make it a bit shorter.
21. Length is good, but there is not much substance inside. Could have done better if the methods are elaborated more in a strictly manner
22. The abstract short and to the point. Everything was touched on from methods to implications. It was a little confusing and lacked attention to detail.
23. Adequate Intro Good; Methods Good; Discussion Adequate; Succint Adequate; ATD There is enough detail in the abstract, but I found it very hard and confusing to read. The grammar needs work by rearranging sentences and cutting out words like "the results are." Overall too wordy, try to be more concise.

How you will improve abstract writing and question posing

These are selected comments about how some of you plan to use this recent Abstract Reading and Peer-Feedback exercise to improve your writing and “asking” skills. Only those that are actual “plans” were retained, and a little editing was applied.

Explain briefly how doing this exercise suggests a way that YOU can improve your abstract next time you have to write one.

1. I'll try to keep it shorter
2. It is very important that the writer edits his/ her writing and rereads the paper a couple of times. This exercise has emphasized that clear concise writing is very important in getting ideas across.
3. I am definitely going to follow the rubric a little more closely instead of merely summarizing the paper in my own way.
4. I will try to be more concise
5. It is simply easier for the reader when the key ideas follow a precise order (context-motivation-methods-conclusions).
6. I will also make sure I understand the article fully before writing the abstract.
7. I think I tend to get hung up on some of the technical data in my abstracts and then fail at explaining it correctly.
8. Abstract xxx illustrated how not to be too technical but still covering everything in the article.
9. Examine every aspect of the marking rubric
10. Take care of where to be specific and where to generalize.
11. I realize that wordy abstracts are harder to read and it's better to keep them simple.
12. This exercise has taught me that writing clearly and succinctly is the key ingredient for a good abstract.
13. I came into the awareness that there are an infinite number of ways that I can follow up in writing.
14. You showed me two abstracts, one wordy but with detail, the other concise but too little detail. This helps with understanding the extremes.

Explain briefly how doing this exercise suggests a way that YOU can improve your question posing.

1. Stick to questions that engage the material
2. I will try to make my question more precisely targeted to the issue in the article.
3. Think about what type of question I am asking and whether it is relevant/ thought provoking.
4. I can try and understand methods and logic used in the article and extrapolate those ideas to other aspects of studies.
5. I might want to open on a new research question instead of simply arguing the methodology.
6. Look to the question types for ideas as where to begin with question-forming process as well for rating of my own.
7. It showed me how easy it is to ask a question that is irrelevant or impractical to pursue. While it is hard to learn how to be insightful, it is easy now to spot what isn't insightful.
8. It shows that the wording of a question is very important in being able to understand it.
9. It shows that a variety of questions can be posed on a given topic.
10. Questions that probe assumptions, ask about a higher level of knowledge or that pursue further information are stronger more meaningful questions than those about contents or clarification.
11. A good question must be in the scope of the article.
12. I can now see that questions need to be very precise and draw directly from the text or topics closely related.
13. A good scientific question might even leave the readers(readers of the same level) to ponder.
14. Be less generic, more specific to the context of the article. It is important to be clear and concise.
15. I can improve by not asking questions about the paper, but assessing the paper and forming a unique question about the current model, and implications to that model from the paper's findings.