Description

Most conferences receive more proposals than they can include, so how can you ensure that your's ends up in the program? In general reviewers are looking for papers that integrate well with the conference theme and offer a focused and original response towards current (relevant, important) issues. Your abstract is key here. It is must be clear, concise and persuasive. It helps if you think of it as a three-part document with an introduction, argument and conclusion:

Introduction

- Choose a descriptive title that indicates your specific question, rather than a general topic. Ensure that readers can understand what your talk is about at a glance.
- Fit your proposal to the conference theme (and comply with submission requirements!). Try to include buzzwords from the Call For Papers and list of suggested topics.
- Introduce your topic by linking it to current debates. Outline and problematize those ideas, identifying any gaps, or unresolved issues within the literature. You don't necessarily have to cite specific authors (or include footnotes) although it often helps if you do identify at least one, or two relevant theorists within the text.

Argument

This is where you need to promote your own thesis.

- First, explain how your paper addresses the issues that you have just identified.
- Explain why your question is significant, why your research is original and your observations important.
- In a twenty-minute presentation it is likely that you will only have time to make 3 – 4 solid points leading towards a conclusion and discussion. It helps if you can outline what those points are and how you arrive at your conclusion.
- Detail your thesis and methodology. For example you might argue that 'by considering this specific material in this particular way I show these three things". Ensure that your reasons for making these links are clear, so that readers are persuaded that your overall approach is persuasive, or at least of interest.

Conclusion

- Concisely summarize the evidence you have gathered and what conclusions can be drawn from it.
- End by emphasizing the important contribution, or impact of this research.

Finally, before you submit proofread your work. Use simple language and avoid jargon. Ensure that cited author names are spelt correctly and the year of publication is accurate. Check whether your

audience is specialist, or interdisciplinary. If generalist, provide definitions and background details as required. Ask colleagues, or people outside of your field to read it. If they can't understand your abstract then rewrite it.

If you are still rejected you can always email the selection committee and ask if they can give you any feedback to help your proposal for future submissions.

Category

1. Career Corner
2. PhDs & Postdocs

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Author
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