RUCS Best Practices Guide

Content

- **Define key words.** If a term is obscure, unfamiliar, or essential to the abstract, briefly define it the first time you mention it. Spell out acronyms the first time they are used.

- **Explain the big picture.** The goal of an extended abstract is to summarize your research; details and specifics should be kept to a minimum. Include only what is strictly necessary for your ideas to flow. Leave out specific data points and equations unless they are critical for understanding your work.

- **Make it as self-contained as possible.** Only include references that are key to understanding your abstract, and briefly discuss their significance when you mention them.

- **Be interesting.** Begin your abstract with information that excites you; it will likely excite your reader. Explain why your research is important and how it contributes to your field.

- **Be explicit.** Do not expect your reader to make inferences. Some undoubtedly will, but it is more difficult for those outside your field of research to draw the same connections.

Style

- **Make every word count.** Write what you mean and nothing more. If a sentence can be made shorter and retain its purpose, shorten it. If a simpler word can be used, use it.

- **Be straightforward.** Assume your reader has no background knowledge of your field of research. Find simple ways to explain your ideas and do not bombard your readers with jargon.

- **Don't be afraid to repeat yourself.** Repeating an idea you mentioned earlier, whether for emphasis or to make a new point, is perfectly acceptable.

- **Let the reader breathe.** When writing a long sentence, make sure to add commas and semicolons accordingly so that the reader can pause and digest what they have read.

- **Create a rhythm.** A slew of long sentences is tiring to read, and several consecutive short sentences sound choppy. A mix of the two is ideal.

- **Avoid colloquialisms.** Academic writing should have formal language. Casual phrases, slang, and contractions should be omitted. Writing in first-person is acceptable.

- **Add variety to your language**. Unless it is crucial to use a certain word repeatedly, it is better to vary your language.