

Abstracts and Titles



...not *this* kind of abstract.

The Abstract

- A recent addition to the IMRaD (“AIMRaD”) standard (1950s)
- Summarizes the paper, typically in 150-400 words
- Usually has a mini-IMRaD structure
- Should include specific results

~~“Results are discussed”~~

- Abstracts are open-access, even when papers are paywalled.

Titles

- ***Titles are hard.***
- Function: advertisement.
 - Brief
 - Clear
 - Informative
 - Engaging
- Perhaps: the shortest possible summary of the paper?

Coastal sustainability depends on how economic and coastline responses to climate change affect each other.

Fractional derivatives—analysis and experimental implementation.

Good and bad titles

These are possibilities for the star-formation example.

Which are brief, clear, informative, and engaging?

- *Spectroscopic observations of the Eagle, Orion, and Carina Nebulae*
- *Some observations on protostellar masses*
- *Protostar distribution and the formation of massive new stars: testing the cluster-assist model*
- *Can patterns of protostar distribution within molecular clouds distinguish between competing models of massive star formation?*
- *Detailed images of protostar neighbourhoods do not support the cluster-assist model of massive star formation*

Some styles of titles

- The colon title (“General issue: more specific point”)

Coupled barrier island–resort model: 1. Emergent instabilities induced by strong human-landscape interactions.

- The question title

Pain Measurement and Brain Activity: Will Neuroimages Replace Pain Ratings?

(Betteridge’s Law, or Hinchliffe’s Rule: When headline/title is a question, the answer is always “no”)

Styles of titles

- The assertive sentence title

Bee communities of small Iowa hill prairies are as diverse as those of large prairie preserves

(Not universally liked)

- The funny title

“Escape from the menace of the giant wormholes”

“Sex with knockout models: behavioural studies of estrogen receptor alpha”

“Telomeres: All's well that ends well”

“Anomalous optoelectronic properties of chiral carbon nanorings...and one ring to rule them all”

One paper *claims* funny titles mean fewer citations.

Today's workshop

Titles

- Each peer group should grab a TOC from a recent journal issue. Rate each title (excellent/good/fair) for:
 - (i) clarity,
 - (ii) specificity
 - (iii) engagingness.
- Choose the best and worst title (with reasons) for reporting to the class.
- Each peer group will receive a short paper with its title removed. For this paper, generate
 - (i) an overly vague title
 - (ii) a good, precise assertive sentence title
 - (iii) a good, precise, non-assertive title
 - (iv) an amusing or provocative title.
- Which do you prefer, and why?