

# HOW TO WRITE A CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

(and then give your presentation at CAFS)



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# OVERVIEW

1. writing an abstract ; DOs, DON'Ts ; audience ; purpose
2. presenting ; food studies conferences ; CAFS community
3. expectations ; being strategic ; what comes next
4. questions and answers



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## writing an abstract:

Be sure you answer the following questions:

- a. what (is the presentation about?)
- b. why (does it matter to the CAFS audience?)
- c. how (did you get to your results?)
- d. so what? (why should anyone care?)
- e. now what? (what questions come next?)



## DOs and DON'Ts:

- do choose a catchy but informative title, not too long
  - do pick keywords that are inclusive but not general
  - do have confidence in your ability/knowledge
- 
- don't pick keywords that are unique to your research
  - don't include citations in your abstract
  - don't plan for a “big reveal” at the end of the abstract



## audience and purpose:

Remember you are writing to two audiences:

1. the **evaluation committee** reading your abstract
  - a. QUALITY:
    - i. Is this submission original or distinctive in some way?
    - ii. Is it thought-provoking?
    - iii. Is the abstract/description well-written?
    - iv. Is it coherent in purpose and potential outcomes?
  - b. RELEVANCE:
    - i. Is the submission appropriate to CAFS and the 2023 conference?
    - ii. Is it relevant to food studies research, theory, and/or practice?
2. **conferenciers** reading the program and sitting in the presentation



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## presenting

- You don't need to present work that is finished.
  - this can be an opportunity to get feedback on work in progress
- Present what you have ready, not your whole project.
  - save something for the next conference
  - use the conference as a way to advance one or another aspect of your work
  - don't spend 100 hours preparing!
- Where are you on the presenter spectrum?
  - are you a performer? a reader? a lecturer? a storyteller?
  - ask your colleagues; find your comfort zone
  - reading is okay! so is spontaneity!





## food studies conferences

- CAFS is a **food studies** conference:
  - that's a rare thing
  - it's an opportunity to get down to the meat of your work
  - you don't need to define basic terms, theories, methods
- There is a **wide range of expertise** in the room:
  - speak broadly but specifically
  - avoid jargon
  - leave space for feedback, questions, critique

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## the CAFS community

- CAFS is a safe(r), more collegial environment than some other academic spaces.
  - use the conference to preview/rehearse your ideas
  - give something original to your audience in exchange for their feedback
  - use the feedback to then speak/write to a more critical audience (e.g., journal reviewers, your thesis/dissertation committee)

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## expectations

### ABSTRACT

- evaluators will read your abstract through the lens of your experience, context, and practice
  - *don't feel the need to "sound like" a senior scholar*
- if the abstract is not accepted on the first submission, you *may* feedback on improving the abstract and resubmitting
  - *don't feel bad; it's an opportunity to improve your submission and get it accepted*



## expectations

### PRESENTATION

- Conferenciers often attend the presentations of people they know, and established scholars tend to be better known.
  - *if your audience is small, make the presentation more intimate; engage with the audience and make it a richer experience*
- It is normal to be nervous about presenting—everyone is.
  - *use that energy to propel your presentation; don't focus on or talk about your nerves, however! (it'll be over in 15 minutes, anyway...)*



## being strategic

### ABSTRACT

- stick to / diverge from the CAFS theme
- strike a balance between broad overview and specificity
- trust your own ability to express an interesting idea without overly defending it (i.e., over-citing or arguing for a conclusion)



## being strategic

### PRESENTATION

- use clear language, short sentences, specific ideas
- don't spend much time on literature review, methods, data, etc.,
  - but make sure you position your work in such a way that they audience knows how you got to your results and how to respond
- stick to the time - practice your talk! (but also don't memorize)
- check in with your supervisor about what needs to be spelled out and what doesn't



## what comes next

### Q&A

- audience questions are often veiled comments: absorb what is said, but you can also push back and ask if there is an actual question
  - *if you don't understand the question, ask for clarification*
- take notes when listening to questions
  - *it helps process the question in real time and can be useful after the fact when revising your work*





## what comes next

### NETWORKING

- there isn't always time to address all questions during the session
  - *follow up during social times or breaks to expand the discussion and make new contacts*
- there may only be a few people you truly connect with at CAFS
  - *don't feel bad if you feel like "the only one" doing what you do*
  - *rejoice in the people you do connect with and make alliances!*



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**What else would you like to know?**

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