TOP 10

Tips for Creating Your Title, Abstract, and Table of Contents Graphic

What is the one thing you can do today that will most impact the readership of your article? Create an impactful title, abstract, and TOC graphic.

Titles, abstracts, and TOC graphics are often left until the last minute and created as an afterthought. Don't fall into that trap — they are the most important elements of your article and crafting them earlier can help you better organize and prepare your overall manuscript. View the title, abstract, and TOC graphic as an important gateway to your article and follow these ten tips to help draw more readers to your research.

1
Take time to create the title, abstract, and TOC graphic.

Don't rush these components — they should accurately represent your article, set out the summary of key findings, and be well-designed in order to attract readers. Gather feedback from others.

2
Avoid the hype.

Words like "first" and "only" should be avoided, and potential applications should be listed only if tested or well-known. It helps to state the potential impact of the research, but do so carefully. Some journals have rules around this topic, so do review the journal guidelines.

3
Write to engage.

There is a balance between using words that describe your research and writing in a highly technical fashion. Use plain English to describe your findings, and avoid using specific acronyms to make it easier for scientists from connected fields to better understand your research.
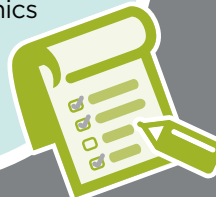
6
Be dynamic and creative.

Add elements that create a visual hook for readers. But be sure you aren't going too far: use caution with humor to ensure the content is not offensive in any way.

5
Remember the 4 Cs.

Be clear, concise, and compelling in the wording and use color graphics for visual impact.

4
Keep it short.

Shorter titles (<20 words) and abstracts (<200 words) are read more often. Lay out the objectives for the research and summarize key findings.

7
Make an impact while remaining accurate.

Be impactful while remaining accurate: ensure that text and TOC graphics are scientifically correct, even when using cartoon images.

8
Deliver high-quality graphics.

Create high-resolution graphical files and images large enough to easily read. Avoid complex structures and small details or small fonts, and design images for the space of a TOC graphic's rectangle — typically this is 8.25 cm by 4.45 cm.

9
Keep it simple.

Eliminate any unnecessary words and avoid extraneous elements in graphics. Be sure your background has a purpose or is contributing to the message and does not distract readers.

10
Don't infringe copyright.

Using images or words from another source is the most common pitfall when creating your title, abstract, or TOC graphic. If you plan to do so, be sure you have all the proper permissions from copyright owners.

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