

Preparation Guide for a Compelling Abstract for Short-talk Consideration

The Maize Genetics Meeting Steering Committee receives more abstracts for short talk consideration than can be accommodated within the schedule. The committee evaluates each abstract based on 1) broad scientific appeal; 2) quality of the science; and 3) balanced demographics (career stage, race, gender and global representation). Importantly, complete stories are not required, instead we look for compelling stories with promising or novel trajectories that excite an audience. Here we have prepared some suggestions to help you develop your abstract.

Broad scientific appeal:

- Frame the specific research in terms of a big biological question
- Avoid use of jargon and acronyms that are specific to a sub-field
- Focus on major findings and avoid including results that are tangential to the main story
- Highlight novel research and technical advances (some stories include both)
- Highlight whether new approaches, materials, tools add to community resources
- Highlight the potential impact this research will have on the field

Quality of the Science:

- Scientific quality is best communicated by clear writing, understandable by scientists outside of the immediate field of study
- Communicate (briefly, without jargon) what you did and some of what you found

A compelling abstract should address these points:

- Scientific question and its importance for study. What is the gap in knowledge?
- Specific research question or hypothesis your research addresses
- Approach and key results that clearly address the hypothesis, presented such that experts and non-experts can understand
- Conclusions that are clearly based on the results presented
- A future direction or broader significance based on the conclusions

Before submitting:

- Draft the abstract well before the submission deadline and allow co-authors ample opportunity to provide feedback, revising as necessary
- Gather feedback from peers outside of your immediate field to gauge appeal from experts and non-experts (consider both the title and the body of the abstract)
- Carefully review for spelling, grammar, and clarity of language

Finally, do not be discouraged if your abstract is not selected for a talk in a particular year. Typically, less than a third of talk requests can be accommodated. The MGMSC enthusiastically welcomes abstracts not selected for talks to be presented as posters. You will receive ample feedback from any mode of presentation from the highly engaged maize genetics community.

Speaker Agreement: By accepting an invitation to give a short talk, the speaker is agreeing for that talk to be recorded during the Maize Genetics Meeting, for that recording to be stored in a password protected website hosted by MaizeGDB, and made available under password protection to meeting registrants for a duration of 6 months after the meeting. Each presenter will be required to sign a permission statement for video and audio recording.

Check out this quick read (presenting research as a solvable mystery):

Sullivan B. [How to write a killer abstract in 10 sentences](#). ASBMB Today, 2021