



EBERLY WRITING STUDIO: WRITING A CONFERENCE PROPOSAL*

Understanding the Purposes of the Conference Paper

Before writing a conference proposal, it is useful to consider why conference papers are an important part of the academic profession. The academic conference paper offers an opportunity for writers to receive feedback from other scholars on work that tends to be in its early stages. This feedback can often be crucial for revising the conference paper into a more developed journal article for publication.

Pre-Writing Tips

Before you begin to write the proposal you should:

- Be sure that you know the deadline for submission and read the submission guidelines carefully for other pertinent information, such as length requirements.
- Look for keywords in the Call for Papers that can be highlighted in your proposal.
- Search online to see if the conference has published past proceedings, including previously accepted conference proposals. Many larger organizations with low acceptance rates also offer tips for writing acceptable conference proposals.
- Locate the leading trends in your field of study and consider how you might join the conversation.
- Talk with a mentor or colleague about the specific conventions of academic proposals in your discipline.

Writing the Proposal

As you draft the proposal you should:

- Consider your audience to determine how much background information will be needed. Remember that many conferences have broad themes; those reading your proposal may not be experts in your field.
- Aim for clear and concise writing that avoids unnecessary jargon, as this will often require elaboration. Words are at a premium in proposals.
- Offer a clear thesis statement and show how your argument is original.
- Request feedback on a draft of your proposal from a colleague or mentor.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Academic Proposals tend to be rejected because:

- The proposal lacks focus, offering a thesis statement that is too broad for a relatively short presentation.
- The proposal doesn't adequately address the conference theme.
- The proposal fails to highlight foundational sources, leading readers to question the author's credibility as a scholar in the field.