

Top ten tips: Sharing your work

As we approach Wounds UK 2026, it is a great time to think about the process of sharing the great work that is happening in practice. Some clinicians are confident presenters, have spoken at events big and small, written for journals and take it all in their stride, but others have yet to have their voice heard. It can be daunting taking that first step. You have missed the deadline for this year's conference, but there is always next year! Make sure you read the abstracts online to see what interests you and make notes about what caught your attention, which may help you design your submission.

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One of the easiest ways to start to share your work is to submit a conference abstract. You can submit to present a poster, so you do not have to speak (although some conferences do offer very short poster presentation slots that are generally only 3 minutes) or a free paper where you have the opportunity to present your work. A free paper slot is also short, between 8 and 15 minutes depending on the conference. While that can be daunting, it is hard to get the most important information across in a short time. Free paper sessions usually have experienced chairs to not only make sure that the sessions run to time, but also to support those who have never presented before – so it is important to let them know if you fall into that category.

Most conferences will give you the opportunity to look at the presenting area before your session and also test how everything works. Do not be afraid to ask.

Before submitting your abstract, you need to think positive and be clear about what happens if you are accepted. Think about how you will get to the conference, who will pay for it and if you will be granted leave to attend.

Abstracts can be challenging to write because you have very few words to sell your work, so it is important to get it right.

1 Ensure you know the deadline!

Many conferences have electronic submission of abstracts, with portals that close completely once the deadline has passed, so if you get the date/time wrong, you will lose your opportunity. If you are submitting to a conference in another country, remember to allow for any time differences. Do not be tempted to leave it until the last minute, as lots of people do, because this sometimes means the system crashes and you lose your opportunity.

2 Read the instructions

This seems an obvious thing to say,

but different conferences have different requirements. You need to take particular note of:

- What is the maximum word count?
- Can you submit additional documents?
- Do tables and figures count as words?
- Can you use product names? Some conferences will automatically reject any abstract that names a product.
- Do you have to already have data? Some conferences will not allow an abstract stating "data to be collected and will be available by the time of the conference".
- What format do you submit in?
- Is there a specific font and size?
- How do you present the title? This may have to be all in capitals, may even have its own word limit and might not contribute to the overall word count.
- What author details are required?
- Do you have to have permission from your organisation?
- Are there specific marking criteria?
- What are the rules about registering for the event and attending, especially if your submission is by more than one author?
- Are there specific copyright requirements?
- What formats are available for conference abstracts? Poster, free paper, poster with a short presentation?
- Are there specific categories you can enter?
- Do you need to include references? If so, are they part of the word count or a separate document – and what format do they need to be in?
- What is the main language of the conference?
- Most importantly, what are the rules on the use of artificial intelligence (AI)? Some very specifically forbid it, others are more lenient. Remember the people reviewing the abstracts will be very experienced and there are many tell-tale signs that AI has been used.

3 Find out the theme of the conference

If you can make your abstract fit with the theme, you are more likely to be accepted. If your work does not seem to fit, try anyway. You may have to write a little extra to explain how your abstract would be of interest. If there are specific categories, such as pressure ulcers, wound infection or economics, think about where your work will sit most comfortably.

4 Think about who the conference is aimed at

Who is the typical delegate, what do you think would interest them, and how will you capture their attention? What will make your work stand out above the others? Use the right language to appeal to them. If it is primarily clinicians, do not be too technical, if it is scientists, be technical (although they do sometime love clinical papers). Also consider words and phrases that may be country-specific, if the conference is international, you need to avoid use of local phrasing, especially abbreviations. The language shows that you paid attention and thought about who you were aiming your abstract at. If you really are not sure, contact the conference organisers and they will guide you or put you in touch with a member of the programme committee. If you have attended the conference previously, think about which posters and free papers attracted you and why?

5 Before you begin, do an outline of what you want to cover

Highlight the things that are most important, then if you go over the word count, you will not delete the most important things.

6 Do a draft in a Word document

This allows you to do several things before tackling the submission process:

- You can check your spelling and grammar.
- You can check your word count and amend it as required. Most electronic submission portals are strict about word counts, so if the limit is 250 words and you have written 251, you will not be able to submit. Some give specific character counts and you will need to check if this includes spaces or not.
- You can show your draft to others for comment.

- You can obtain permission from your organisation/employer
- You can consider alternative ways of using your words, use tables, use bulleted lists, add a figure as a PDF file – these all save words.
- You can compare it to the instructions to make sure you have followed them
- You can compare it to your draft outline to see if you have included all of the items you felt were important
- You can discuss with co-contributors who will be the lead author and presenter.
- You can check your use of abbreviations and language.

7 Final version

Once you are happy with your word document, ensure you save it to your computer marked as 'final version'. Personally, I always like to print a copy.

8 Check the submission criteria

Would you be eligible to enter for an award or special category, e.g. first time presenter or novice researcher?

9 Submit your document!

Ensure you double check everything before you press send because cut and pasting frequently results in errors. I find one of the best ways to do this is to read things out loud, but this may not be possible if you are in a busy office!

It helps to set aside time to do the submission. It frequently takes longer than you think, so you may wish to put a do not disturb sign up. Remember, you will have to submit a lot of additional information, so allocate plenty of time. At a minimum, you will need to include your contact details and those of anyone else involved in the work, including their email, organisation and sometimes a contact number.

10 When you are successful, be sure to let people know

Put it on your CV, tell your boss, tell your family – they will be really proud of you! Remember, this is now happening, so you have to now prepare your presentation or poster. Most of all, celebrate! ●