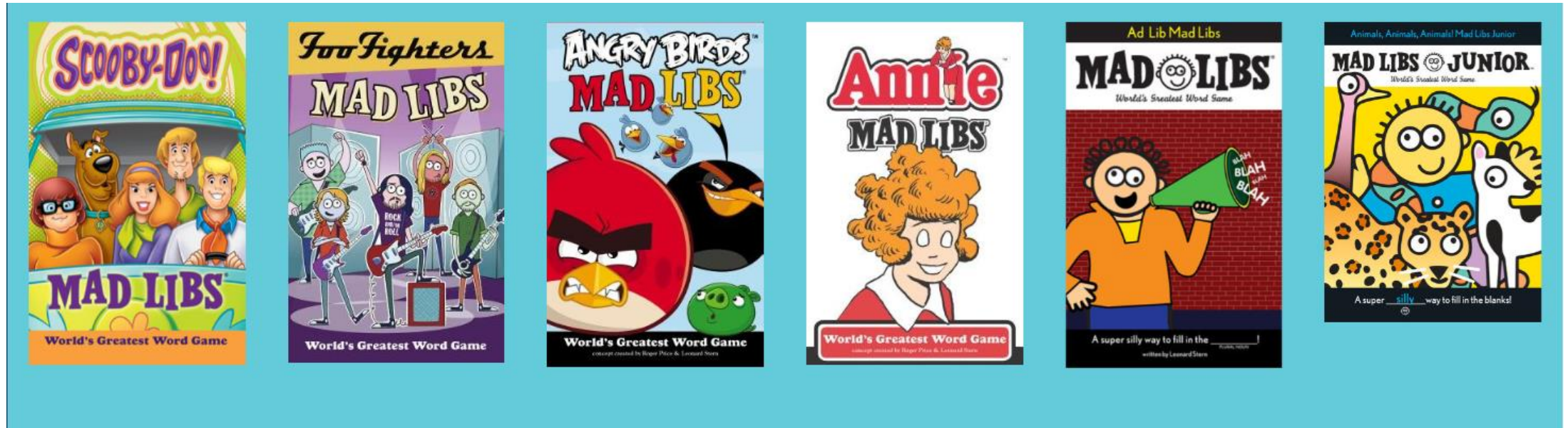




GPAM Academic  
Tuesday  
and  
MSEP  
Mashup  
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## Abstract writing: The MadLibs approach

Megan A Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH

# Remember MadLibs?

## The Troll Under the Bridge

One day, a \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to cross a bridge over a pond.

Under that bridge lived a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

troll. Stamp, stomp, stamp. He \_\_\_\_\_ over the bridge.

“Who tramps over my bridge?” yelled the troll. “Stop or I will

\_\_\_\_\_ you!” But he had already crossed the bridge.

On the next day, a sleepy \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to cross the

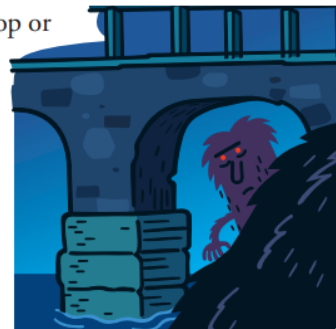
bridge. Stamp, stomp, stamp. He \_\_\_\_\_ over the bridge.

“Who tramps over my bridge?” yelled the troll. “Stop or

I will \_\_\_\_\_ you! Oh, never mind.

Nobody listens to me anyway!” And with that,

the troll \_\_\_\_\_ away.



- Back in the day you could write an entire story just by filling in key words within an existing framework.

# Remember MadLibs?

- Writing the traditional medical 250-ish word abstract is very similar, you use a concrete structure and fill in the details from your own study.
  - Avoid the too-long introduction
  - Address components reviewers are seeking
  - Focus on key information so you can then use creativity in your poster or presentation



# Learning objectives

- Compare traditional writing approaches to MadLibs abstract writing
- Outline critical information to include in each abstract section
- Apply learnings while writing an abstract during this session



Today

- Focus on **practical**
  - **Write as we go**
    - **Paper and pen**
    - **Laptop with blank page**
    - **Ok to do bullet points and turn into sentences later**
- Won't have time to discuss....
  - The joy of completing a project and learning something brand new
  - The feeling of excitement when you think about sharing your project with others at a scientific meeting
  - The elation you feel when an abstract is accepted

# Key points before you start writing

- **Format of abstract** is typically Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion

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- **Format of abstract** is typically Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion
- When **drafting abstract**, I recommend going in order of Methods, Results, Introduction, Conclusion
  - You're likely to put the most effort into the sections you write first, and the methods and results should receive the most attention
  - Writing the Introduction first usually makes the Intro the longest section, most of the time you want the Methods and Results sections to have the most content and attention



# Overall principals of abstract writing

- Methods and results are the most important sections

Your abstract sections should be kind of like this
Introduction
Methods
Results
Conclusion

Not like this
Introduction
Methods
Results
Conclusion

# Overall principals of abstract writing

- Methods and results are the most important sections



Introduction	sections should be kind of
Methods	on
Results	
Conclusion	

Introduction	Not like this
Methods	
Results	
Conclusion	



# Overall principals of abstract writing

- It is ok to have sentences with choppy wording, it is not ok to have spelling or obvious grammar errors
  - Ask someone outside your field to read the abstract
- You are writing an abstract on a study that is finished. Thus, **use past tense**. “The purpose of this study was....”, “we conducted surveys,” “we found that.” (Exception to this rule is URS)

# Overall principals of abstract writing

- Make sure you are using **consistent terms** throughout your abstract
  - Population studied: Use “adolescents”, versus varying youth/teens/adolescents/participants
  - Measures: call same thing in each section
- Not everything will fit in the word count you have.
- Some things are really important to report, but not in an abstract
  - IRB approval not usually in an abstract
  - References not usually needed in a medical abstract
  - Info about every single variable not usually needed
- If your data came from a larger dataset, only need to describe and report on the data you used

# Let's write!

## METHODS

*Your methods must address the following:*

1. Type of study: survey, focus group, etc.
  2. Subject population: Who was in your study?
  3. Data collection methods
  4. Variables of interest
  5. Analysis methods
- *Must include:* study design, participant population, recruitment approach, key measures, analysis approach
  - *Not essential:* IRB approval, inclusion/exclusion, every variable, every statistical approach



# Let's write!

## RESULTS

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- There are often three tiers of results:
  1. **WHO:** You must address WHO was in your study. The number of participants, ages, gender, race, or other characteristics. For conference abstracts include response rate if you did a survey
  2. **WHAT:** The basics of what you found. This may include descriptive analyses (mean, median of measures you used), or themes from focus groups.
  3. **WHAT ELSE???** COMPARISONS/PREDICTIONS/ASSOCIATIONS: This third level of data can be used if you have room and want to include more advanced modeling or association data.

# Let's write!

## RESULTS: Example

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### Madlibs style:

A total of \_\_\_\_\_ enrolled in our study who were average age \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_% female and \_\_\_\_\_% on Medicaid. We  
# of ppts mean(SD) % %  
found that the mean \_\_\_\_\_ value was \_\_\_\_\_ and mean \_\_\_\_\_ value was \_\_\_\_\_. Participants who were \_\_\_\_\_ were more  
variable 1 value (CI) variable 2 value (CI).  
likely to report \_\_\_\_\_(OR=x.xx, 95% CI xx-xx).

- **Example:** (WHO) 273 participants (73% response rate) completed the online survey. Participants were 63% female, 90% students, and had an average age of 18.8 (SD=0.9) years. WHAT 20% of participants reported an ASRS score consistent with ADHD, and 36% scored in the IAT's problematic user category. COMPARISONS/PREDICTIONS/ASSOCIATIONS Those with ADHD symptoms were more than twice as likely to report symptoms of PIU (OR=2.5, 95% CI: 1.2, 5.3). Estimated mean daily Internet use was 86.1 minutes (SD=144.2); the most frequently reported online application was social networking sites (52.9%, 95% CI: 48.8, 57.0). No associations were seen between ADHD symptoms and overall time online, or percentage of time on different applications.





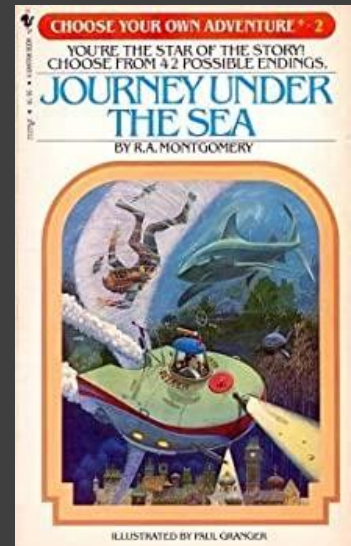
**WHAT IF I TOLD YOU**

**YOU CAN WRITE YOUR METHODS  
AND RESULTS DURING THE STUDY**



# Now you have written the methods and results

- These two sections should be the longest of your abstract
- Check your word count and get a sense of how much space you have for introduction and discussion
- Now you have a choice:
  - Introduction
  - Discussion



# Let's write! INTRODUCTION

Total length: 3-4 sentences

## Sentence 1:

- Define the problem and capture the reader's interest. *State what is known.*
- Illustrate that your research area of interest is common, or serious, or important, or all 3!
- Try to include a fact-based number where appropriate. For example:
  - Greyscale affects over one million children a year and leads to numerous health and societal consequences.
  - *BUT...don't give a general statement such as "Greyscale is an important problem for children." This is not very interesting or motivating, make it compelling.*

# Let's write! INTRODUCTION

Total length: 3-4 sentences

**Sentence 2:** *Sentence 2 has two possible paths*

- Identify the gap in the literature that you will fill. *State what remains unknown.* Examples include:
  - *It remains unclear how children with greyscale learn to manage their own care by age 18.*
  - *BUT...don't be disparaging of past research, such as "Previous studies have ignored the importance of gender in this area", this negativity is irritating to the reader. Try to avoid the word "never", such as "Gender has never been examined as an important factor in greyscale." Chances are it has, and your reviewer may know about it.*

# Let's write!

## INTRODUCTION

Total length: 3-4 sentences

Sentence 2:

- Sometimes your study needs to introduce a second main concept, can do that in sentence 2 if needed.:
  - Greyscale affects over one million children a year and leads to numerous health and societal consequences. It is estimated that over 75% of children have a magical sword by age 10. It remains unclear how children with greyscale leverage magic to manage their condition.






Let's write!  
INTRODUCTION

Total length: 3-4 sentences

**Sentence 3:**

- Fill in the blanks... "The purpose of this study is \_\_\_\_\_."  
State what you will do

Examples include:

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the processes by which children learn to manage their greyscale independently.
- 

Let's write!  
CONCLUSION

Total length: 3 sentences max

Sentence 1:

Summarize or synthesize your findings. Do not restate them. Alternatively, offer an overall conclusion summary statement.

- Example: We found that males were more likely to report difficulty in transitioning to independent greyscale care.

Let's write!  
**CONCLUSION**

Total length: 3 sentences max



**Sentence 2:**

Interpret or explain your findings in light of your hypotheses or previous evidence. Alternatively, offer thoughts on what those results could be used towards clinically or in future research.

Example: These findings suggest that clinical educators should consider tailoring educational messages to different genders.



## Let's write! CONCLUSION



Total length: 3 sentences max

### Sentence 3:

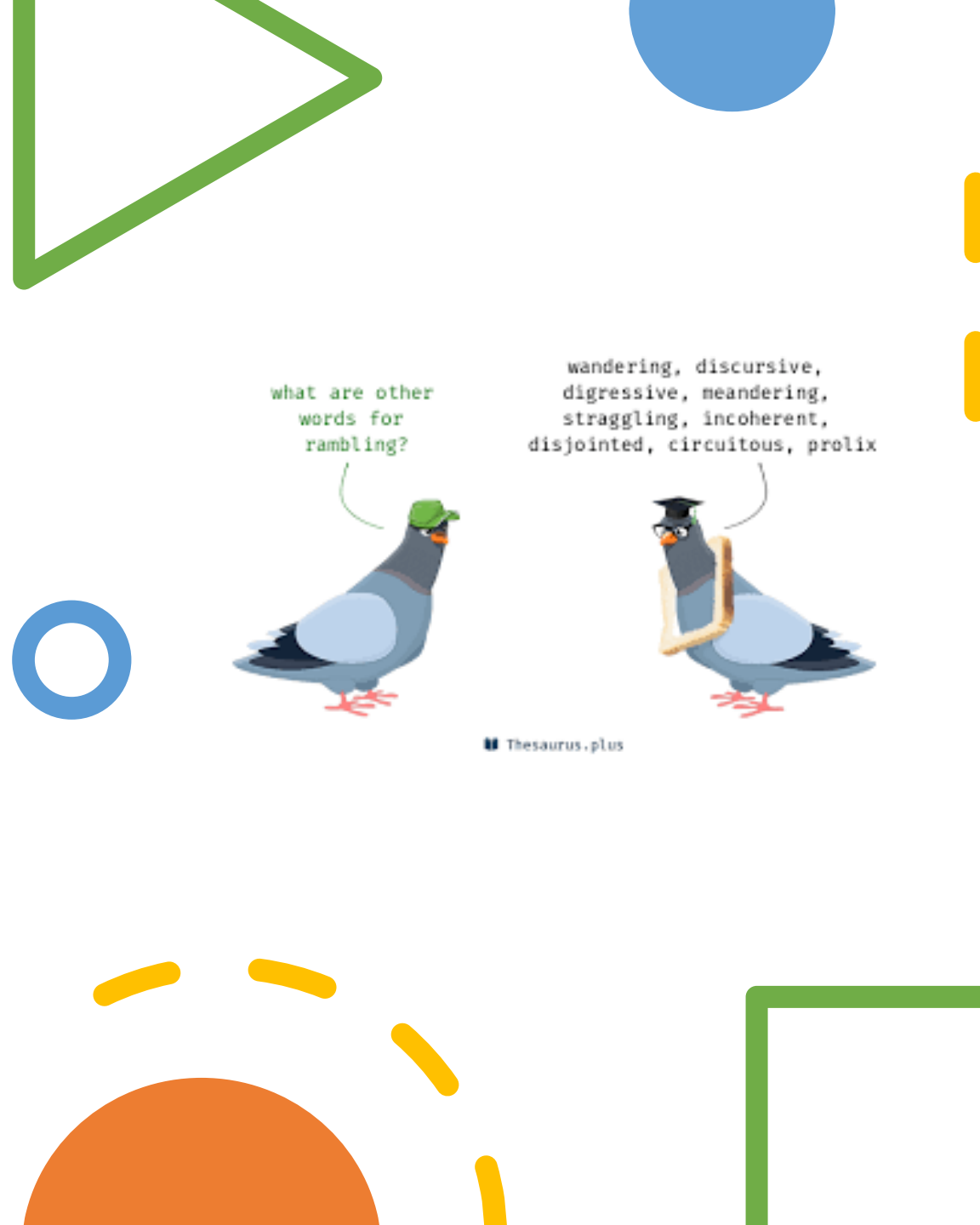
Could use a 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence to introduce future study or implications if you have something important to say. Don't always need a third sentence.

Don't use up space by saying the generic statement "Future studies are needed."

Example: Future studies could incorporate gender-specific prevention messages to determine whether this approach improves greyscale care for male youth.

# Now what?

- Too long?
  - See if you can cut the first or last sentence
  - Look for wordy phrasing
    - In order to
    - As previously mentioned
    - Rambling



what are other  
words for  
rambling?



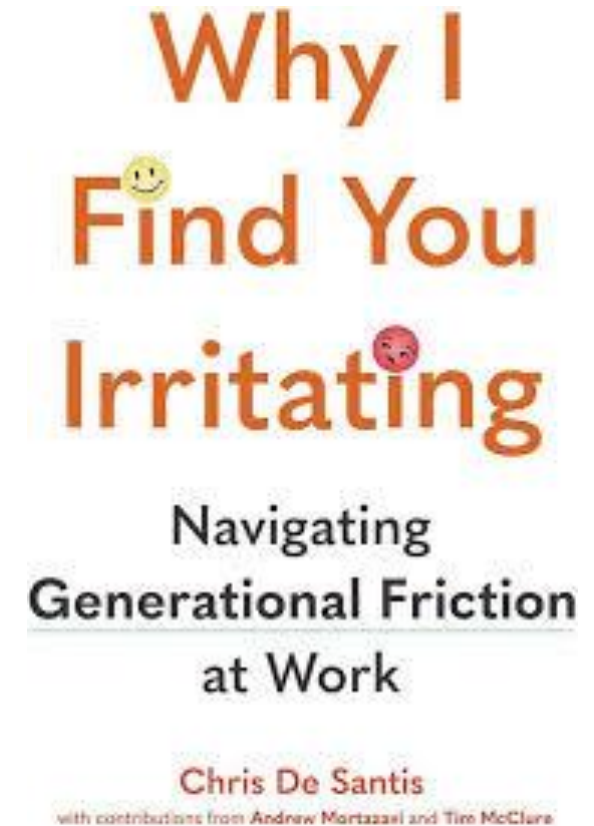
wandering, discursive,  
digressive, meandering,  
straggling, incoherent,  
disjointed, circuitous, prolix



Thesaurus.plus

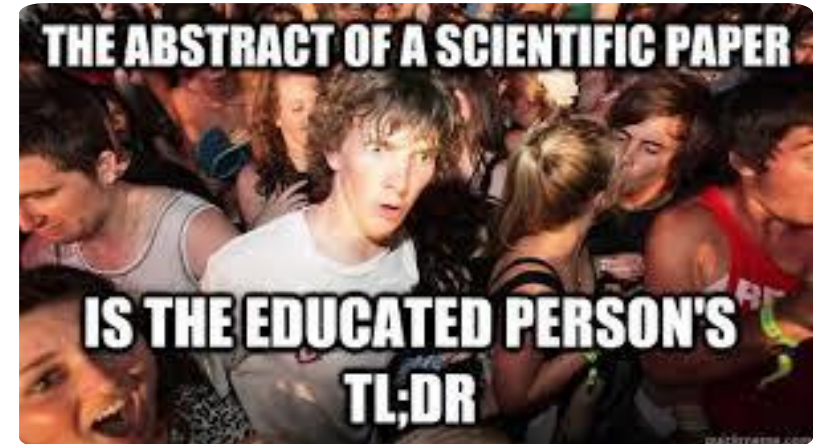
# Now what?

- Ways to irritate your reviewers: internal and external
  - Save your abstract with a name like “abstract version 4”
  - Send the abstract 24 hours or less before submission and ask for input
  - Don’t include your title
  - Have different fonts in your abstract



# Now what?

- Ask for input
  - Mentor or collaborator: should review 3-5 times
  - Other reviewers
    - Peer
    - Other mentors
    - Other faculty
    - You should have at least one reviewer who is not part of the study team
- The 3 C's of editing: Know what you are asking for
  1. **Conceptual** and scientific edits
  2. Clearing up any **confusing** sections
  3. **Copy** edits



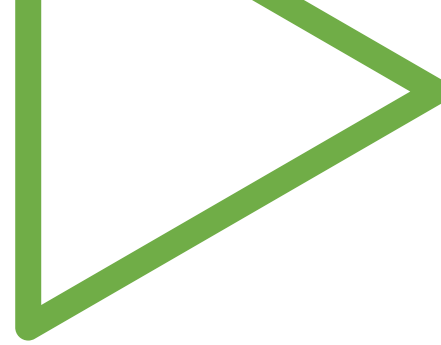
# Final steps

- See the abstract in different ways
  - Print and read on paper
  - Read backwards by section
  - Read backwards by sentence
- Near the end, use a checklist



# Now what?

- You submitted! Great job!
  - Start on the paper





# Learning objectives

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