Writing Conference Abstracts

Conference abstracts are not only discipline-specific but also often tailored to a particular research line and context, e.g., applied linguistics, classroom-based interaction research drawing on cognitive psychology. Having said that, much of what follows can be applied to a range of contexts.

1. Find out as much as you can about the conference – not only from the call for proposals but also the review rubric, if one is provided, and previous years' conference. Consider:
    *   Is it a research conference or primarily practitioner-based? A practitioner audience may put more emphasis on research implications and require a longer session than the standard 20 minute paper presentation.
    *   Where is the conference based? British applied linguists approach some research areas differently from North American linguists. On a practical note, reviewers may prefer to see British spelling and terminology.
    *   Does the conference have a theme?
    *   Is it an international conference or is it more likely to be local? International conferences will be receptive to a greater range of languages and contexts.
    *   Is there a publication associated with the conference? Read previous issues.

2. Consider volunteering as an abstract reviewer. TESOL, for example, draws reviewers from its interest section members. You can contact conference chairs to find out how you can participate.

3. No data? Consider a poster presentation. Some conferences are only interested in completed research but for others 'preliminary analysis' of work in progress is acceptable.

Finally, a few websites with some basic information that you may find helpful:

http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/12/how-tosday-how-to-write-a-paper-abstract/
http://www.gradhacker.org/2011/06/01/writing-the-academic-conference-proposal/
http://www.chapman.edu/academics/honors/_files/current-student-docs/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Abstract.pdf
http://www.cgpacs.uci.edu/files/cgpacs/docs/2010/grants/attachments/Abstracts_Samples_students.pdf
http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/ceca/Annual_Conference_Docs/writinganabstract.pdf

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