Abstract Submission Best Practices
Conceptual Abstracts

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General

Do
- Describe why your research is relevant to *ethics* and not just philosophy or neuroscience.
  - Successful abstracts describe research that introduces or addresses an ethical question rather than a purely theoretical one.
- Break your abstract up into sections.
  - Use paragraphs to break up different parts of the abstract.
  - You can also use formal headers like background, methods, results, etc.—if they are appropriate for your research.

Don't
- Write one 400-word paragraph.
  - Breaking up the sections will let reviewers more easily follow your research.
  - The following sections are an example of types of paragraphs often included.

Introduction/Background

Do
- Review prior literature in this area.
  - Are there similar papers?
  - What arguments do the authors make?
  - This section should be enough to let reviewers know you have done your homework and know the relevant and prominent work in this area.
- Briefly present a summary of prior literature.
  - What were the main takeaways from these papers?
  - Is there any consensus or agreement on the issue?
  - Are there any emerging trends that go against the majority of the literature?
- Connect prior research to your work.
  - How do the arguments made in the literature influence your project?
  - Are you offering a new approach that hasn't been tried before?
  - How is your approach different from what has already been published?
- State clearly the thesis or your main argument.
  - This should be one sentence that encapsulates the main idea of your project.
  - Describe what you are trying to accomplish with your research.
  - Hint at what arguments you will make to arrive at your conclusions, if possible.
- Cite background material.
  - Most of your allowed 5 citations should be in this section.

Don't

- Spend the entire abstract reviewing background research.
  - This section shouldn't be so long that it overshadows your original contribution to the literature.
- Oversell how your research is doing something no one else has tried before.
  - Be charitable to the existing work in this area. Chances are some credit is due to work that has come before you. Acknowledge this, and then move on to how your project builds on existing work.
- Wait till later in the abstract to clearly let reviewers know what your project is about.
  - The last sentence of this section should let reviewers know what they are to expect for the rest of the abstract.

Example Introduction/Background Section:

"Neural devices have the capacity to enable end users to regain abilities lost due to disease or injury – for instance, a deep brain stimulator (DBS) that allows a person with Parkinson's disease to regain the ability to fluently perform movements or a Brain Computer Interface (BCI) that enables a person with spinal cord injury to control a robotic arm. While end users recognize and appreciate the technologies' capacity to maintain or restore their capabilities (Kögel et al. 2020), the neuroethics literature is replete with examples of concerns expressed about agentive capacities: A perceived lack of control over the movement of a robotic arm might result in an altered sense of feeling responsible for that movement (Kellmeyer et al. 2016). Clinicians or researchers being able to record and access detailed information of a person's brain might raise privacy concerns (Klein/Rubel 2018). A disconnect between previous, current, and future understandings of the self might result in a sense of alienation (Schüpbach et al. 2006). The ability to receive and interpret sensory feedback might change whether someone trusts the implanted device or themselves (Collins et al. 2017)."

<div align="center">Thesis/Argument</div>

Do
- Briefly describe the strategies you used to develop your arguments and generate your conclusions.
  - Describe the kind of research you're presenting. Did you conduct a literature review, case study, meta-analysis, survey, interview, focus group, policy analysis, etc.?
- Write a "thesis," or a clear description of the position you're defending in your abstract (and your poster).
- Give a quick summary of the arguments you will use to defend your thesis.

Don't
- Use overly technical jargon or terminology.
  - Describe your argument and methods in plain language. Reviewers may not be trained in your specific area and will be confused by terms that aren't commonly known or defined. It is fine to mention a particular research strategy (e.g. Grounded Theory, Linear Regression, Cost-Benefit Analysis, etc) but briefly explain what this means for those who are unfamiliar

- Try to explain everything from your poster/paper in the abstract. Instead, give a short summary of your argument.

Example:
"Inquiries into the nature of these concerns and how to mitigate them has produced scholarship that often emphasizes one of those issues – responsibility, privacy, authenticity, or trust – selectively. However, we believe that examining these ethical dimensions separately fails to capture a key aspect of the experience of living with a neural device. In exploring their interrelations, we argue that their mutual significance for neuroethical research can be adequately captured if they are described under a unified heading of agency. On these grounds, we propose an "Agency Map" which brings together the diverse neuroethical dimensions and their interrelations into a comprehensive framework."

Conclusion

Do
- Mention the significance of your findings for this area of research or the field.
  - Do your results change anything about the way we understand a concept or approach an activity?
  - How are your results similar or different to what was found in the past?
  - How do your results impact ethical considerations in this area?
- Mention any limitations or challenges?
  - If there were results that go against your main argument, this is the time to mention how you are accounting for that data.
  - Were there reasons you think this data differed from what you expected or other results?
- Mention any future work that can build upon this work.
  - Are there any next steps? What are they and why are they important?
  - How can these results be used in the future?

Don't
- Forget to include a conclusion.
  - It is tempting to present your argument and be done with the abstract, but having a few sentences to help reviewers understand why your work is important can greatly improve clarity.
  - Conclusions do not have to be formal or their own section, such as "In conclusion…"

Example Conclusion:

Within the legal sphere, a defendant can show that thanks to his disorder, his behavior was not voluntary, that he lacked the mental state essential to enact the crime, or that he is lawfully insane. This defense, with the help of neuroimaging, could have changed the outcome of the Hernandez trial. However, the linear causality between a neurologic diagnosis and an individual's subsequent mental state and/or conduct remains unclear. The legal system must

carefully follow developments from research on neuroimaging to establish careful guidelines for the permissibility of neuroimaging in courts; such potential guidelines (understanding the limitations of neuroimaging, privacy protections, reliability and accuracy, etc.) will be explored in this poster presentation.