
Abstracts

An abstract is a comprehensive and concise summary of an article, thesis, or conference proceeding. It consists of a single, stand-alone paragraph of approximately 150-300 words. Clarity and conciseness are essential, as readers will often decide whether to read the entire document based on the contents of the abstract. Abstracts are also used for database indexing, so they should incorporate key terms. The abstract can be considered the single most important paragraph of your document. Be sure to research abstracts in your discipline as models. Remember, it will likely require several drafts and careful editing to produce a clear and concise paragraph. Abstracts vary between disciplines; however, a well-written abstract:

Should:

- Follow a typical essay format: introduction, body, and conclusion
- Follow the chronology of the document
- Accurately reflect the purpose and content of the document

Should not:

- Evaluate what is in the document
- Mention new information
- Repeat the title

Depending on your discipline, you may want to consider the following:

1. Problem under investigation

- What problem does this work attempt to solve?
- What is the main argument, thesis, or claim?

2. Participants

- Who is involved, specifically?

3. Methodology

- If your paper uses specific models or theories, should you elaborate on their function?
- What are the essential features of the methodology?

4. Findings

- What are the basic findings?

5. Implications

- What is the importance of this research?
- How does this work add to existing knowledge on the topic?
- Are there any practical or theoretical applications?
- Are questions raised for additional research?

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

The University of Melbourne. Writing an abstract: Understanding and developing abstracts. Retrieved from www.services.unimelb.edu.au/academicskills