

How to write an Abstract

What is abstract:

An abstract summarizes, usually in one paragraph of 300 words or less, the major aspects of the entire paper in a prescribed sequence that includes: 1) the overall purpose of the study and the research problem(s) you investigated; 2) the basic design of the study; 3) major findings or trends found as a result of your analysis; and, 4) a brief summary of your interpretations and conclusions.

Importance of a Good Abstract

Sometimes your professor will ask you to include an abstract, or general summary of your work, with your research paper. **The abstract allows you to elaborate upon each major aspect of the paper and helps readers decide whether they want to read the rest of the paper.** Therefore, enough key information [e.g., summary results, observations, trends, etc.] must be included to make the abstract useful to someone who may want to examine your work.

How do you know when you have enough information in your abstract? A simple rule-of-thumb is to imagine that you are another researcher doing a similar study. Then ask yourself: if your abstract was the only part of the paper you could access, would you be happy with the amount of information presented there? Does it tell the whole story about your study? If the answer is "no" then the abstract likely needs to be revised.

Composing Your Abstract

An abstract is a short summary of a longer work (such as a [dissertation](#) or [research paper](#)). The abstract concisely reports the aims and outcomes of your research so that readers know exactly what the paper is about.

Write the abstract at the very end, when you've completed the rest of the text. There are four things you need to include:

Your [research problem](#) and [objectives](#)

Your [methods](#)

Your key [results](#) or arguments

Your [conclusion](#)

An abstract is usually around 150–300 words, but there's often a strict word limit, so make sure to check the requirements of the university or journal.

The abstract SHOULD NOT contain:

- Lengthy background or contextual information,
- Redundant phrases, unnecessary adverbs and adjectives, and repetitive information;
- Acronyms or abbreviations,
- References to other literature [say something like, "current research shows that..." or "studies have indicated..."],
- Using elliptical [i.e., ending with "..."] or incomplete sentences,
- Jargon or terms that may be confusing to the reader,
- Citations to other works, and
- Any sort of image, illustration, figure, or table, or references to them.