

Key Elements

Reason for writing:

What is the importance of the research? Why would a reader be interested in the larger work?

Problem:

What problem does this work attempt to solve? What is the scope of the project? What is the main argument/thesis/claim?

Methodology:

An abstract of a scientific work may include specific models or approaches used in the larger study. Other abstracts may describe the types of evidence used in the research.

Results:

Again, an abstract of a scientific work may include specific data that indicates the results of the project. Other abstracts may discuss the findings in a more general way.

Implications:

What changes should be implemented as a result of the findings of the work? How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic?

Qualities



Qualities

- **One or more well-developed paragraphs**
- **Short (50-300 words; 3-5%)**
- **Stands alone**
- **Includes all the major elements of the larger text**
- **(in order)**
- **No new information**

Types of Abstract

Descriptive

- Used for humanities and social science papers or psychology essays.
- Describes the major points of the project to a reader.
- 50-100 words

Informative

- Used for sciences engineering or psychology reports.
- Informs the audience of all essential points of the paper.
- About 200 words

Structure

Descriptive

- Topic (background)
- Research Question (purpose)
- Particular interest/
focus of paper
- Overview of contents

Informative

- Topic (background)
- Research Question (aim
or purpose of research)
- Methods used
- Results/findings
- Conclusion

Writing an Abstract

- **Read** over your paper and identify the key points for each section
- **Re-read** each section and shrink the information in each down to 1-2 sentences
- **Ensure** you have written one to two sentences for each of the key points outlined above
- **Connect** the ideas with appropriate transitions

DOs

- **Avoid** repeating information from the title
- **Be specific**
- If many results, only **present** the most important
- **Mention** just the major implications
- **Relate back** to your purpose and research question

DON'Ts

- **Do not commence with "this paper...", "this report..."** or similar. It is better to write about the **research** than about the paper. Avoid use of "in this paper", what other paper would you be talking about here?
- **Do not contain references**
- **Do not use sentences that end in "...is described", "...is reported", "...is analyzed"** or similar.
- **Do not begin sentences with "it is suggested that..." "it is believed that..." "it is felt that..."** or similar. In every case, the four words can be omitted without damaging the essential message.
- **Do not repeat or rephrase the title.**

Voice



- Modern scientific style prefers the **active** voice.

E.g. Gasoline was sweetened by iron bauxites in air.

Iron bauxites sweetened gasoline in air.

- Abstracts are often an exception, but only if the passive voice reduces the total number of letters and words. Use passive structures in order to report on findings, focusing on the issues for the more general reader.

E.g. The level of sweetening was measured by...

- Avoid using I or we, but choose active verbs instead of passive when possible .

E.g. *The study tested...* rather than *It was tested by the study.*

Clichés

- **Introductory sentences**

This study (dissertation, research) aims to illuminate
examines the role of...
explores why...
investigates the effects of...
assesses the impact of...on...
developed and tested the idea that...

- **Leading with research questions**

This study (dissertation, research)...
is motivated by two research questions: (1) [Insert research question one] ?(2) [Insert research question two]? To examine these questions, the study ...
"[Insert a research question]?" is a fundamental question in [the name of your area of interest].

- **Leading with a dissertation aim or goals**

This study (dissertation, research)...
has three goals: (1) [insert goal one], (2) [insert goal two], and (3) [insert goal three].

- **Significance of the study**

This study advances our understanding of...

- **Research strategy**

Using comparative case analysis, this research explored the role of...

- **Major findings**

The findings from the research...
illustrate how...
show that the impact of [insert text] on [insert text] is more complex than previously thought/assumed.
address a controversial belief among practitioners that...
illustrate the antecedents and consequences of [insert text] and [insert text] in...
suggest that the effect of [variable X] on [variable Y] was moderated over time when...

- **Conclusion**

The results, implications for managers, and future research are discussed.
Theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

- **The findings provide**

support for the key arguments.
support the prediction that...
support the model:
offer insights into...
prompt a re-thinking of [insert your area of interest]