

Abstracts



An abstract is a concise summary that introduces readers to the purpose and scope of your work. While this handout covers the basics of writing an abstract, always tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Informative vs. Descriptive Abstracts

Informative abstracts are most common in student writing and include the results, conclusions, and recommendations found within the study or report. Informative abstracts may vary in length, but are generally 150–200 words, unless otherwise specified.

Descriptive abstracts are often only a few lines long (less than 100 words) and do *not* include the results or implications of the work.

Writing an Abstract

The following steps may be helpful when writing an abstract:

1. **Understand expectations:** Know the format and content requirements before writing your abstract.
2. **Organize:** Review your paper as a whole, and summarize each main idea and section with a single sentence. Organize these sentences in the same order the information appears in the larger work. (Remember, if you are writing a descriptive abstract, you will not include results and conclusions.)
3. **Format:** Check the length and format requirements for your abstract, and structure your abstract accordingly. Typically, your abstract will appear on its own page with the title *Abstract* centered and formatted the same as the body text. (**Note:** the example shows APA format.)
4. **Review for mistakes:** After writing your abstract, review it for errors. Also, considering letting someone else look over it to make sure the content and organization is relevant and appropriate for your audience and that your writing is free of errors.

