

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

Most abstracts are either informative (most common) or descriptive (less common). An informative abstract communicates the comprehensive content of the paper within 150-250 words, while the descriptive abstract outlines the purpose and scope of the work, without providing results or conclusions, using under 100 words.

Tone and Voice

Since the purpose of the abstract is to tell readers what your document is about, use professional language your audience can quickly and easily understand. Avoid jargon and slang that might alienate readers.

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. **Gather information:** Review your writing as a whole, and summarize each main idea and section with a single sentence. (Remember, if you are writing a descriptive abstract, you will not include results and conclusions.)
3. **Format:** Check the length requirement for your abstract and paragraph accordingly. Also, review format requirements. 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 your writing is free of errors.

