



Writing Abstracts

An abstract is a short, independent statement that describes a longer work. Although abstracts vary by discipline and publication, all abstracts explicate the most important components of a work; they do not analyze, but describe.

Abstracts can be:

Informative: Includes all of the main arguments, results, and conclusions of the work. Most abstracts follow this format. Length varies according to discipline, but is very rarely more than 10% the length of the entire work.

Descriptive: Includes the type of information that will be contained in the work. While these abstracts will include the purpose and scope of the research, they will not discuss results or conclusions. These abstracts are shorter, usually under 100 words.

Tips for writing abstracts:

- When writing a first draft, read through the work and find passages that capture the most important elements. Then, reduce those passages into easily-digestible ideas. After this first try, see how close you are to the required length. If you are under the required length, consider whether you have more to discuss. If you are over, evaluate whether everything is essential to the original work.
- Because word count is so important with abstracts, **revise often**. Take out all unnecessary words.
- Focus on **organization** and **relevance**. Describe the main arguments clearly and succinctly. Do not define specific terms or theories; that's what the full-text document is for!
- If your abstract is for a potential publication, think of **keywords** that capture the subject of the work and make sure they appear in your abstract.
- Have your abstract read by someone else, preferably someone familiar with the original work.

Remember: Abstracts are the first thing a person will read. They need to be clear and intriguing so a reader will feel compelled to learn more about the research. Including all essential information in a brief and interesting way is therefore very important to promoting research.

