



Writing Centre

Abstracts

We often encounter abstracts at the beginning of research papers.

An abstract summarizes, in **under 300 words**, the major aspects of a paper.

They tell us the **purpose, problem, method, results** and **conclusion** of the work.

It helps the reader decide if they want to read the entirety of the paper or move on to another source.

Abstracts address **two** basic questions: *what* is this paper about, and *does* this paper work for my research?

Since it's just a summary of the work you've already done, don't worry! It's easier than you think!

What is included in an abstract?

- The overall purpose and the problems/questions you explored;
- The basic design of the study;
- The major findings;
- A brief summary of your interpretation/conclusions.

When you begin composing...

- Take whole sentences or key terms from each section and put them in a sequence that summarizes the paper;
- Revise or add connecting words or phrases to help with flow;
- Make sure the information agrees with what you have written in the paper.

How do you know if your abstract is complete?

- Imagine that you haven't read your paper before, or that you are a researcher doing a similar study:
 - If your abstract was the only part of the paper that you could read, is there enough information?
 - Does it cover all major aspects?
 - If you are left with questions or gaps, then you know you need to add more information.

DO:	DO NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write in the active voice, in past tense, and in third person. • Make it complete enough to stand alone from the rest of the paper. • Use key words from the document. • Write it last since it is a summary of the whole paper. • Put it on a standalone page including the preexisting header. • Centre “Abstract” (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks). • <i>Option:</i> put keywords after the abstract. Indent as a new paragraph, type <i>Keywords:</i> in italics, then list the keywords. See example for reference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include lengthy background information. • Reference other literature. • Use abbreviations, jargon or confusing terms. You’ll need to explain them further if you include them, and there isn’t enough room for that. • Insert an image, illustration, figure, or table or make references to them. • Include the title. The abstract will be read alongside the title, so you don’t need to rephrase it. • Refer to information that is <i>not</i> in the body of the paper. • Use <i>I</i> or <i>we</i>.

Example formatting (APA):

PURDUE ONLINE WRITING LAB SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

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Abstract

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Keywords: lorem ipsum, nulla vitae

Online Resources:

- USC Libraries Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Science Research Paper: 3. The Abstract
- Owl Purdue: APA, General Format.