

ABSTRACTS

An abstract is a brief yet comprehensive summary of the contents of an article or paper. Basically, it summarizes the important points of a given text and allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly. A well-prepared abstract can be the most important paragraph of your paper. The abstract needs to be dense with information but also readable, well organized, brief, and self-contained.

A good abstract is

- ⚡ **Accurate**—Make sure that the abstract correctly reflects the purpose and content of the manuscript. Do not include any information that does not appear in the body of the paper. You might consider writing a paragraph-by-paragraph topical outline first, including just the topic sentences of each paragraph. Then see if you can cluster these under more condensed headings, and so on.
- ⚡ **Self-contained**—Define unique terms and abbreviations. Paraphrase rather than quote.
- ⚡ **Concise and specific**—Make each sentence as informative as possible especially the lead sentence. Abstracts should not exceed 120 words. Begin the abstract with the most important information, but don't waste time repeating the title. This may be the purpose or thesis or perhaps the results and conclusions. Include in the abstract only the four or five most important concepts, findings, or implications. Use active voice, rather than passive voice, but without the personal pronouns *I* or *we*.
- ⚡ **Nonevaluative**—Report rather than evaluate; do not add to or comment on what is in the body of the manuscript.

Your abstract should follow your title page and include a “page header.” On the first line centered should be the word Abstract. The next line starts the abstract, but it is not indented like a regular paragraph. Remember readers frequently decide on the basis of the abstract whether to read the entire article; this is true whether the reader is at a computer or is thumbing through a journal.

This information about writing an *abstract* is from the newest edition (5th) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.