

## Abstract Guide

Adapted from the *Publication Manual* (American Psychological Association, APA, 2010, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)

**In research, the abstract may be the only piece that potential readers read!**

The abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of your paper, and should allow the reader to review the paper's content quickly. A well-prepared abstract can be the most important paragraph of the paper, for being the first contact with databases of search engines. Based on the abstract, readers decide whether to read the full article. An abstract resumes a vast amount of information and should be:

**Precise:** Reflect properly the purpose and content of the paper. Should not include information that does not appear in the body of the paper. If the study reproduces or extends previous research, mention it in the abstract with name and year. A useful way to verify it's accuracy is to compare your abstract with a list of the titles of your paper.

**Non-evaluative:** Report rather than evaluate. Do not add further details or comments that do not appear in your paper.

**Coherent and readable:** Use a clear and concise language. Use verbs instead of equivalent nouns and the active voice instead of passive voice (e.g., "investigated" instead of "a research of", or "the authors presented the results" instead of "results presented by the authors"). Use the present tense to describe conclusions and results with continued applicability. Use the past tense to describe specific variables manipulated or results measured.

**Concise:** Be brief and assure that each sentence contains a maximum of information.

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### Empirical Studies:

- The problem you are investigating.
- Participants (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.).
- Characteristics of the method, the research design and the reasons why you chose this method.
- Primary objectives and hypotheses.
- Methods and procedures used.
- Major findings or results (effect size, confidence interval, significance level, etc.).
- Conclusions that can be inferred from the data and the results, including implications for future research and applications of the study.

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### Literature Review or Meta-Analysis:

- The problem or relationship you are investigating.
- Eligibility of the study.
- Type of participants.
- Main results (effect size) and significant moderators.
- Conclusions (and limitations).
- Implications for theory, policies or practice.

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### Theoretical Articles:

- How does the theory or model and the principles on which your research is based work?
- What phenomena does the theory or model explain and its links with empirical results?

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### Methodological Articles:

- The general method proposed.
- The essential features of the proposed method.
- The range of application of the proposed method.
- In the case of statistical procedure, some of its essential characteristics (strength, power, efficiency, etc.).

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### Case Studies:

- The subjects and the relevant characteristics of the individual or the organization.
- The nature of the problem or the solution illustrated by the case example.
- Questions regarding additional research or theory.

## How to write a good abstract?

(Adapted from Philip Koopman, <<http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html>>-)

### The Abstract

Normally, online databases contain only abstracts of the articles; this is why it turns vital for you to prepare a complete and concise abstract of your work to challenge the potential reader to get a copy of your article. An abstract should be a synthesized description of your paper. Avoid challenging the reader to seek explanation for vague expressions. The abstract should make sense of itself.

### Checklist: Parts of an Abstract

Despite the fact that an abstract is very short, in most cases it should include the following sections: motivation, problem statement, method, results and conclusions. Each section typically contains a single sentence, leaving open certain range of creativity.

#### Motivation

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Why is the problem and the results important? If the problem is not obviously “interesting”, it may be better to describe first the motivation. However, if your work is part of a widely recognized problem, it may be better first exposing the problem indicating which part of it you are using in your work.

This section includes the importance of your work, the difficulties of the area and the impact it might have, if successful.

#### Problem Description

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What is the problem you are trying to resolve? What is the scope of your work (a generalized approach or a specific situation)? Beware of not using too much jargon! In some cases it is appropriate to put the problem description before the motivation, but that only works if most readers already understand why the problem is important.

#### Method

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How did you proceed in resolving the problem? Did you use a qualitative or quantitative method? Which design? Control group? Standardized instruments? What kind of statistics? How did it prove? Data analysis? etc. What was the extension of your work (population, age, gender, socio-demographic data, inclusion criteria, sample, sampling, etc.)? What variables were controlled, ignored or measured?

#### Results

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What were the results? Specifically, most psychological research reports that something is significantly correlated with what is measured or not measured: Discuss here the results in terms of numbers and quantities. Avoid using vague concepts or approaches as “very”, “more”, “better”, “much”, “near” or “around”. In this section, there is a tension between providing data that can be easily misinterpreted and not having space including all limitations.

#### Conclusions

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What are the implications of your results? Are they going to change the world? Unlikely! Are they a significant “win”, a good blow, or simply serve as a road sign indicating that this path is a waste of time? - (all the above is useful!). Are your results general, potentially generalizable or are they specific to a particular case?

Writing an efficient abstract is hard work, but may increase the impact of your work and intrigue readers to read your publication. Make sure that all components of a good abstract are included in your next paper.