

Writing an Abstract

What Is an Abstract?

An abstract is a concise and complete representation, generally consisting of a single paragraph, which captures the essence of a paper. While a good abstract can entice a reader to read your entire paper, it can also stand in place of the paper. It must be comprehensible to both specialists and non-specialists in your area of research.

Writing an abstract requires you to condense your thoughts and arguments. The abstract is normally written after the paper is completed, although it is reviewed prior to the paper. It may be time-consuming to write, as deciding which details to include and exclude can be rather difficult. By writing an abstract, you are trying to persuade your readers in 3 to 5 minutes that your paper will present something valuable.

The content of an abstract is a balance and incorporation of all of the following:

- An introduction to and descriptive summary of your paper.
- Your contribution to what has been written and discovered in your field before.
- Your conclusions, including the findings and results of your research.

Pointers for Writing an Abstract:

- Follow the format requirements (250-300 words, double-spaced, 12-point font).
- Your abstract should be logically structured and provide an accurate and complete picture of your paper.
- Find simple ways to explain complicated ideas. Avoid wordiness and emphasize your key points.
- Generally, you should limit scientific terminology to the point that it can be accepted by specialists while not impeding understanding by non-specialists.
- Avoid frequent usage of acronyms and abbreviations, and provide the full name before using them.
- Exclude general introductory matters and historical background, unless such information is necessary to understand the abstract.
- Exclude tables and charts.
- Exclude citations, unless you need to refer to a source on which your thesis is based.
- Proofread your abstract and then give it to a colleague or friend, particularly one who knows relatively little about the topic of your paper. He or she may find something you overlooked.