

Abstract Tip Sheet

An **abstract** is a self-contained and short summary of your completed research. Abstracts are usually found immediately preceding a research document. They are used by prospective readers to decide whether or not they would be interested in reading the entire text. Thus, an abstract should represent as much as it is possible the central points of the paper, and also reflect its reasoning. Essential components vary according to discipline. An abstract of a social science or scientific work (such as linguistics) may contain the scope, purpose, methodology, and results of the work. An abstract of a humanities work (such as literature) may contain the thesis, important key words, and conclusion of the work. Regardless of discipline, the abstract is an original document rather than an excerpted passage. An abstract is **not** a review, nor does it evaluate the work being abstracted.

For your abstract to make a positive "first impression" to your readers, start with a draft of the complete manuscript (if available), and be sure that your abstract answers the same questions as the research itself:

A. Motivation/problem statement

Why did you do this study or research? Why do we care about the problem?
What practical, scientific, or theoretical gap is your research filling?

B. Methods/procedure/approach

What did you actually do to get your results? (E.g., analyzed 3 novels, tested a theoretical model, interviewed 17 students)

C. Results/findings/product

As a result of completing the above outlined procedure, what did you find or learn?

D. Conclusion/implications

What do your findings mean? What is the significance of your findings? What are the larger implications of the findings, especially for the problem/gap identified in step A?

More tips for writing an effective abstract

1. Start off with the new information contained in the paper, rather than the general topic. One way to do this is to begin the first sentence with the phrase "this paper" or "this study."
2. Specify the purpose of the study and the scope of your subject area clearly.
3. Identify important phrases and key words, using references if needed.
4. Ease your readers into your topic. What might seem perfectly obvious to you after working on a research project for a long time might be new information to your readers.
5. Communicate a crucial piece of information in every sentence.
6. Never include information in the abstract that does not appear in your paper.
7. Structure the abstract in the same order as your paper.
8. Assemble information into a double-spaced single paragraph with no indentation.
9. Avoid using the first person "I" or "we." Choose active verbs instead of passive ones, whenever possible (e.g., use "the study tested" instead of "it was tested by the study" or "I tested in the study").
10. Avoid, if possible, using trade names, acronyms, abbreviations or symbols in your abstract. These would have to be explained, taking up valuable space.
11. Use non-evaluative language in your abstract. That is, *report* instead of *comment* upon your findings.

Abstract Tip Sheet

12. Keep it short (between 150 and 250 words). Remove extra words or phrases. Omit lengthy examples, tables, and supporting details.
13. Revise the paragraph so that the abstract conveys only the essential information.
14. While you should aim for brevity, be careful not to make your summary too short.
15. Check to see if the abstract meets the guidelines of the targeted audience.
16. Look at abstracts in professional journals for examples of how to summarize your research.
17. Give the abstract to a colleague or a friend (preferably one who is not familiar with your work) and ask if it makes sense or not. This process will assist you in recognizing if your abstract needs editing.
18. If possible, take your paper to your school's writing centre for assistance.

A well-written abstract will encourage others to read your research and increase its impact. It also improves your chances of getting your research accepted by conferences and academic journals.

Sample Abstracts

Linguistics

Hyland, Fiona. 2003. Focusing on form: Student engagement with teacher feedback. *System*. 31 (2): 217-230.

This paper explores the relationship between teacher feedback and student revision in two academic writing classes. The study adopts a case study approach and looks at all the feedback given to six students over a complete course. Using data from teacher think aloud protocols, teacher and student interviews and student texts, it examines the extent to which teachers focused on formal language concerns when they gave feedback and the use that students made of this feedback in their revisions. Findings suggest that despite the teachers' beliefs and teaching approaches, language accuracy was a very important focus for their feedback. While most of the students engaged with this feedback when revising their drafts, the extent to which they used it varied among the case study subjects. Two case studies who made consistent and sustained use of form-focused feedback are discussed in greater detail to examine student engagement with form-focused feedback over a complete course.

Literature

Goel, Shilpi. 2010. Feminist Literary Criticism. *Language in India: Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow*. 10: 403-410.

Feminist Literary Criticism is the rebellion of the female consciousness against the male images of female identity and experience. The concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female consciousness, often in reaction to male paradigms for female experience. It is an ideology that opposes the political, economical and cultural relegation of women to positions of inferiority. The critical project of Feminist critics is thus concerned with "uncovering the contingencies of gender" as a cultural, social and political construct and instrument of domination. This paper offers a comprehensive guide to the history and development of Feminist Literary Criticism and a lively assessment of the main issues and authors in the field.

References

<http://psychology.about.com/od/apastyle/ht/abstract.htm>
<http://research.berkeley.edu/ucday/abstract.html>
<http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/writing/abstract.html>
http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/WC/Files/TIPSHEET_WRITINGABSTRACT