

Writing an Abstract

Goal: An abstract should provide a short but clear statement of your research project. In one to three sentences, it tells the reader the purpose of the paper, the methodology used, the results, and the importance of the results.

Best Practices: A well-crafted abstract will touch on four main elements of the project, as described below. You'll want to think through each element carefully, even though you may just touch on it in the abstract. Remember, an abstract is SHORT!!!

PURPOSE:

Explain the purpose of your paper. State the primary objectives and scope of the paper. What is the rationale for your research? Why did you choose the topic of research? Is the topic you are researching an ignored or newly discovered one? Why is it significant? What is your thesis statement?

METHODS:

Clearly state the methodology (techniques or approaches) used in your paper. What is the method or "lens" you are using for analysis? What is the larger organizational structure?

RESULTS:

Describe your results so far. What have you learned or revealed in your research? Give special priority new findings that contradict previous theories. (In other words, have there been any surprises?)

CONCLUSION:

Describe the implications of the results. Why are the results of your research important to your field? This is a time to emphasize the "so what" factor.

Length: The abstract should be no more than **75 words**.

Example of a completed abstract:

This interpretive study analyzes the journals of middle-school girls who attend an urban public school to determine how they use journal writing to negotiate the joys and difficulties of adolescence. Comparing the journals with statements gained through interviews, the study shows that writing is used as an outlet for positive but not negative emotions and therefore challenges previous research on the topic. (word count: 62)

(Sources: <https://www.honors.umass.edu/abstract-guidelines> and <http://www.appstate.edu/~jacksonay/rcoe/Writing%20the%20Problem%20Statement.doc>.)