

Writing an Abstract



What in the world is an abstract anyway?

- In general, an abstract is simply a very brief summary of your paper
- It gives the reader a quick, comprehensive survey of the paper's content

And how will I know an abstract when I see one?

- 1) An abstract should be typed as a single paragraph in a block format
This means no paragraph indentation!
- 2) A typical abstract should only be about 6 sentences long or 150 words or less.
- 3) The abstract page should not be numbered
- 4) The abstract should be on a separate page following the title page (in some cases it may be on the title page itself)
- 5) The word "Abstract" is used as a title and is centered at the top of the page. There should be a double space between the title and the abstract.
- 6) The abstract should not contain quotations from the text.

Let's pretend that I want to write my own abstract.

Where exactly do I begin?

- 1) Generally, it is best to **begin** an abstract with a statement of the topic or problem that you address in your paper. (Keep in mind though, that an abstract in itself is not an introduction to your paper.)
 - Example: "Counseling adolescents is filled with pitfalls."
- 2) The **remaining** part of the abstract should state the paper's purpose

- Your abstract should include:

A description of the nature of the problem

A description of the major points and thesis

A description of the methods or evidence used

A description of the major conclusions reached

-You may find it helpful to write your abstract by summarizing each major section of your paper with a single sentence

3) The **final** sentence of the abstract normally states the general conclusions, implications, or applications of the research

How will I know if my abstract is good?

-The *APA Publication Manual* describes a good abstract as being:

-**Accurate** - It should correctly reflect the contents of the paper. It should not contain information that you don't already have in your paper.

-**Self-contained** - The abstract should define all abbreviations and acronyms. (Instead of writing ADD, you would have to write out Attention Deficit Disorder)

-**Concise and specific** - Each sentence should be informative but as brief as possible. Check every word to make sure it is essential.

-**Nonevaluative** - An abstract is not a place to throw in your own creative insight. Do not comment on what you wrote about in your paper.

-**Coherent and readable** - Write it clearly; don't try to impress the reader with unimportant gobbledygook or jargon.

As you can see, it can be very easy to construct an abstract. Hopefully you can now sit down and write one on your own. If you are a bit confused though, or just not sure you are on the right track, please feel free to come to the Writing Center to have a one-on-one consult with a trained consultant!

