Abstracts

An abstract of a paper is a complete and concise description of the paper – essentially, it is the entirety of your research condensed into one paragraph. Abstracts are often used for indexing papers in large databases and are likely to be a reader’s first introduction to your work. A strong abstract should include keywords that make your paper easy to find and encourage the reader to read your paper in full.

**Basic Components of an Abstract:**
- Double spaced
- 150 – 250 words long*
- On a separate page
- Paragraph not indented
- Keywords (optional)

**Qualities of an Abstract:**
- Concise
- Readable
- Accurate
- Non-evaluative
- Coherent

* MLA abstracts may vary in length, but their general rule is to aim for five to seven sentences.

Abstracts and introductions are NOT the same. Unlike an abstract, an introduction provides detailed background information and a framework for the topic(s) being discussed in the paper.

**What should I write in my abstract?**

What you include in your abstracts is dependent on your disciplines conventions; however, every abstract should include the following elements:

**Research Question:**

Your research question is the problem your work looks to resolve. Your abstract should explain the context in which your problem occurs as well as the significance of that problem and your rationale for addressing it.

**Methodology:**

In scientific papers, the abstract should list the methodology you use to obtain your results. In non-scientific work, the abstract should briefly discuss the theories that inform your argument.

**Conclusions/Results**

You might be hesitant to give away the conclusion of your hard work on the very first page, but this is crucial information to include in your abstract. It helps readers decide if your paper will be helpful for their research and allows conferences and journals to determine if your paper is a good fit for them.

**Importance/Implications**

An abstract should conclude with a brief suggestion or description as to how this research can be utilized by others in your discipline. This can mean using it to inform best practices or as a launching pad for further research. Again, this helps readers determine if and how they can benefit from your paper.

**DO NOT include information that is not in the body of your paper!**

Created and revised for the UNLV Writing Center by Vicki Stanley, Dec. 2018
Don’t:
• Repeat the title of the paper in the abstract.
• Use the passive voice.
• Use extensive jargon
• Copy and paste information from your essay

General Abstract Outline**:
• State research method/argument (1-2 sentences)
• Include the methodology/theories that inform your research (1-2 sentences)
• Discuss the conclusions/findings of your research (1-3 sentences)
• Conclude your abstract with the importance/implications of your results (1-2 sentences)

** The number of sentences per section listed are suggestions. Check with the requirements of the discipline, journal, and/or style guide requirements to meet their formatting and content requirements.

Example (Social Science):

Abstract

In this article I examine why Kuwait and other migrant-receiving countries in the Persian Gulf have failed to enfranchise migrant workers and their descendants through citizenship. [research question] I contend that the increasing exclusion of expatriate workers from these societies can be understood in comparison with the disenfranchisement of the stateless populations to which these governments are host. [methods/theories] I argue that nationalist narratives that portray these groups as threatening to the host societies have been extremely significant in creating an atmosphere of increasing isolation and exclusion for both expatriates and stateless peoples. [conclusion] I conclude by examining what the Kuwaiti case tells us about how notions of membership and belonging develop and the significant role of historic and political circumstances in shaping these notions. [implications]

Keywords: citizenship, expatriates, GCC, Gulf, law, migration, nationalism, stateless.

Note the abstract includes the research question in the form of a statement. This is common practice in academic writing.