



WRITING AND REVISING ABSTRACTS

The abstract is the general overview of a manuscript, which highlights the major points/issues for your reader. It is a widely accepted feature in manuscripts written in APA Style, as well as many other style guides, and frequently abstracts are included at the top of an article or document. You may also find abstracts as very useful to read while researching. Abstracts are also widely read and, therefore, must appeal to the needs of this diverse audience while maintaining the integrity of the paper. In many ways, the abstract is the dispassionate summary of the paper designed to help anyone know what your work is about. It is often used by libraries and databases to help catalog published material. However, there's nothing *abstract* about the abstract.

Writing the Condensed Abstract (One Paragraph)

The abstract should be 150-250 words and describe in non-evaluative language what your paper is about.

- ◆ Introduction: compose a sentence or two defining the topic and gaining interest of your reader.
- ◆ Background of Study: describe/discuss necessary information leading up to the study.
- ◆ Thesis: explicitly state the focus/angle of your research.
- ◆ Summary: write a few sentences explaining the features of your research or argument and the value of the topic in your field.
- ◆ Research: refer to your research and summarize your results or conclusions.



Formatting

In APA, include the running head and page number as usual. The phrase "Abstract" is centered on the page and not bold. Do not indent the first line. Avoid direct quotes and citation.

Revising the Abstract:

Remember, an abstract should be:

- ◆ A focused paragraph highlighting the aspects of the research study/literature review;
- ◆ A combined brief summary and analysis of the problem;
- ◆ Developed sufficiently to aid the transition to the thesis and direction statement.

Work with colleagues and read one another's abstracts for development of content. Upon reading it, you should have a clear idea of the topic, conclusions, and direction of what follows. If not, help each other by asking questions and identifying areas of concern in the discussion.

*By Anne Maxham, Ph.D.
Director of Writing, Antioch University*