

How to Write an Abstract: APA 7



Most scholarly journals require an abstract but not all student papers do. Ask your instructor if an abstract is necessary for your paper.

The Purpose of an Abstract

- The purpose of an abstract is to summarize the major aspects of the entire paper
- The abstract provides readers with the main points of the paper so that they can decide whether or not to read the whole article in its entirety
 - Many people decide whether to read a paper based on the title and the abstract
- Library databases use the keywords to generate search results so readers can find your study using relevant search terms

The Content

- The following information is included (1–2 sentences for each):
 - The overall purpose of the study and the research questions being examined
 - The basic design of the study: the method being used
 - Major findings or trends found in the analysis
 - A brief summary of the interpretations and conclusions

How to Write an Abstract

- The abstract should be the last step in the writing process
- Summarize core topics, then revise, proofread, and format
- Include what you set out to find, how you did it, the results, and your conclusions
- Make sure to include the implications of the results
- Only include references if they are significant
- Use complete sentences

The Format of an Abstract in APA 7th Edition (APA 7 Manual, p. 38)

- No more than 250 words (typically 150–250 words)
- The abstract is on its own page after the title page and before the body of the paper begins (the second page, if title page and abstract are both required)
- The word “**Abstract**” should be centered at the top of the page and in bold
- Typically in paragraph format but a structured format (with labels for each section, e.g., Research Question, Method, Results, Conclusions) is okay as well
- Do not indent the paragraph

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Keywords

- Keywords should be descriptive and capture the most important aspects of your paper
- Usually about 3–5 keywords (words, phrases, or acronyms)
- Not typically required for students papers (ask your instructor)
- Indent the first line (0.5 inches) and italicize the word “*Keywords:*”
- The keywords are all lowercase and separated by commas
- If a second line is needed it is not indented

Qualities of a Good Abstract From the APA 7th Edition Manual, pp. 73–74

- Accurate: only include information that is explained in the body of the paper
- Nonevaluative: report the information rather than evaluate it
- Coherent and readable: use clear and deliberate information
- Concise: be brief yet informative

Example:

Abstract

The abstract paragraph is not indented. Make sure that you use the same font throughout your paper and that it is double spaced. It should be on its own page and should stand on its own and repeat content from the paper. The abstract comprehensively sums up the main points of the paper so that the reader can decide whether or not it will be relevant to their needs. Include one or two sentences that summarize the following aspects of the paper. State the overall purpose of the study and the research question that was investigated. If applicable, describe the methods that were used. Clearly describe the results and findings. Explain the implications of the findings and their significance to the field. You can include one or two key references, as needed, but do not include less important ones. Do not include lengthy background information or tables/charts/figures. The abstract is typically no more than 250 words.

Keywords: abstract, summary, key references, findings, APA 7