

ABSTRACTS

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An abstract is a complete and concise description of a paper—essentially, it is the entirety of your research condensed into one paragraph. 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.

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. Check with the requirements of the discipline, journal, and/or style guide requirements to meet their formatting and content requirements.

Basic Components of Most Abstracts

- 150-250 words long*
- Placed on a separate page
- Paragraph is not indented
- Keywords (optional)
- Readable style
- Accurate and non-evaluative language
- Concise and coherent text

* Abstracts may vary in length, but the general rule is to aim for five to seven sentences.

HOW TO WRITE AN ABSTRACT

What you include in your abstract is dependent upon your discipline's conventions; however, many abstracts briefly highlight each element of the IMRaD structure: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion.

Introduction

First, identity your research's purpose: What research question(s) are you trying to answer and why? Typically, a research question is phrased in the form of a statement in an abstract. You can include some brief context for the topic, but don't go into too much detail. However, do make sure to define any specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to the average academic reader.

Methods

Second, indicate what type of research methods you used to answer your question. Describe what you did in one or two sentences. In other words, *how* were you able to come to whatever conclusions you arrived at?

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Results

Third, summarize the main research results. While you may not have room for all of your findings here, you still want to highlight the most important findings. It is critical to include the specific results you found through the methods you explained previously.

Discussion

Lastly, help the reader to come away with a clear understanding of the main point that your research has either proven or argued. Here, you should discuss the main conclusion(s) of your research. Ask yourself, what is the most important takeaway that needs to be expressed?

ABSTRACT EXAMPLE (SOCIAL SCIENCES)

Here we show an abstract that follows the IMRaD organization described above.

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. **[Introduction]**. 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]**. 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. **[Results]**. 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. **[Discussion]**.

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

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABSTRACTS

It is important to keep in mind that readers in different disciplines will be looking for different types of abstracts. This distinction is most frequently seen between humanities abstracts and STEM abstracts. It might be the case that an abstract for a humanities paper ought to be shorter, taking more of an outline approach, rather than that of a summary.

As previously stated, the best way to make sure that you are following all necessary genre conventions is to check in with a professor or peer in your field of study. As with any academic format, you will want to try to adhere to the standard of your specific course, conference, or journal.