

# How to: Write an Abstract

*An abstract is a brief summary of a longer research paper, article or grant proposal. It informs potential readers about the research within a short amount of text. The abstract, in general, allows potential readers to see if the article, paper, or project might be a match to their interests. It can be a paragraph to a page in length, and is objective in its writing style.*

## **Apply**

Abstracts can be used to apply to present at academic events such as symposiums and conferences. They may be submitted for consideration to publishers or for prizes and awards including funding for the original investigation. As well, they may be used to describe the research for online and/or library searches, or to gain feedback from a professor. For these reasons, a well-written abstract can help to bring attention to the research, to share the study with a larger audience, increase awareness of the research and profile of the researcher/author, or secure financial support.

## **Think of Keywords**

In some disciplines, the abstract concludes with a list of keywords. These keywords are terms that assist with literature searches and skimming. Selecting terms which are useful in searches and can be cross-referenced to similar or comparable research in the same field is important. Avoid using jargon known only to those in the field of study. Keep the terms meaningful to a broad audience.

## **Reflect**

Some abstracts are written after the paper or article has been completed. On the other hand, abstracts can be written in advance of the research in order to present the project to potential supporters such as publishers, funding agencies, or a professor. In any case, the abstract should reflect the research's main purpose without overwhelming the reader with too many details.

## **Clarify**

It can be difficult when first writing abstracts to distinguish between the purpose of the study and what process, methods and tools were used to conduct the investigation. Be sure to separate the "why" from the "what". The goal is to clearly present what is the original question or problem that prompts the research and then describe the process for finding out more or resolving the question. Describe specifically how the problem or question is explored and investigated. Include the methods, methodology, and any tools. Finally, mention the main findings, that is, what information or knowledge was discovered or what might be revealed should the project go ahead.

It may be acceptable to mention to whom the results may be of interest and to define what applications the findings may have outside of the study depending on the discipline and the preferred length of the abstract.

Through writing a clear and interesting abstract you may gain attention and support for your research. Good luck!