Abstracts


An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of [a paper]; it allows readers to survey the contents of [the paper] quickly and, like a title, it enables abstracting and information services to index and retrieve articles.

A good abstract is:

• **Accurate**: Ensure that an abstract correctly reflects the purpose and content of the manuscript. Do not include information that does not appear in the body of the paper. Comparing an abstract with an outline of the paper's headings is a useful way to verify its accuracy.

• **Self-contained**: Define all abbreviations . . . and acronyms. Spell out names. . . Define unique terms. Paraphrase rather than quote. Include names of authors and dates of publication in citations of other publications (and give a full bibliographic citation in the [paper’s] reference list).

• **Concise**: Make each sentence maximally informative, especially the lead sentence. Begin the abstract with the most important points. Do not waste space by repeating the title. Include in the abstract only the four or five most important concepts, findings, or implications. Use the specific words in your abstract that you think your audience will use in their electronic searches.

• **Nonevaluative**: Report rather than evaluate; do not add to or comment on what is in the body of the manuscript.

• **Coherent and readable**: Write in clear and vigorous prose. Use verbs rather than the noun equivalents and the active rather than the passive voice. Use the present tense to describe results with continuing applicability or conclusions drawn; use the past tense to describe specific variables manipulated or tests applied. Use the third person rather than the first person.

An abstract of a report of an empirical study should describe

• the problem under investigation, in one sentence if possible;
• the participants or subjects, specifying pertinent characteristics, such as number, type, age, sex, and species;
• the experimental method, including the apparatus, data-gathering procedures, complete test names, and complete generic names . . . ;
• the basic findings, including effect sizes and confidence intervals and/or statistical significance levels; and
• the conclusions and the implications or applications.

An abstract for a literature review or meta-analysis should describe

• the problem or relation(s) under investigation;
• study eligibility criteria
• type(s) of participants included in primary studies;
• main results (including the most important effect sizes) and any important moderators of these effect sizes;
• implications for theory, policy, and/or practice and
• the conclusions (including limitations).

An abstract for a theory-oriented paper should describe

• how the theory or model works and/or the principles on which it is based and
• what phenomena the theory or model accounts for and linkages to empirical results.

An abstract for a methodological paper should describe

• the general class of methods being discussed;
• the essential features of the proposed method;
• the range of application for the proposed method; and
• in the case of statistical procedures, some of its essential features such as robustness or power efficiency.
An abstract for a *case study* should describe

- the subject and relevant characteristics of the individual or organization presented;
- the nature of or solution to a problem illustrated by the case example; and
- the questions raised for additional research or theory.

Do not exceed the word limit of the journal to which you are submitting your article. Abstracts typically range from 150-250 words. When preparing your abstract, begin on a new page and identify it with the running head or abbreviated title and the page number 2. The label Abstract should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered, at the top of the page. Type the abstract itself as a single paragraph without paragraph indentation.

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