

WRITING ABSTRACTS

What are *abstracts*?

Abstracts are short summaries of reports or academic papers. In short, abstracts can be viewed as a mini version of a paper.

The **main goals** of abstracts are:

- to decide whether a person wants to read the whole paper or not,
- emphasizing the most important details and
- helping the reader understand and read through complex documents.

An abstract should comprise ca **200–300 words** and should provide a brief summary of each of the main sections of the paper, i.e. introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion.

Most or the whole of the abstract should be written in the past tense, since it refers to work done. Furthermore, the abstract should never give any information or conclusion which is not stated in the paper. However, references to literature do not need to be cited in the abstract.

In addition, it is important for an abstract to demonstrate the same level of technical **language** and expertise as the paper itself.

Types of abstracts

There are two types of abstracts, i.e. **informative and descriptive**. The former is like a table of contents, while the latter lays out the content of the document.

Form

A typical abstract follows the following structure:

1. purpose

What is the author's reason for writing? / What is the author's main idea?

2. scope

What is the author's focus in this piece?

3. method

What kinds of evidence does the author provide?

How does the author try to convince the reader of the validity of the main idea?

4. results

What are the consequences of the problem or issue that the author is discussing?

5. recommendations

What solutions does the author present to the reader to resolve the problem presented?

Does the author recommend action or change in his/her piece?

6. conclusions

Does the author describe the 'cause and effect' relationship or explain the origins of this issue or problem?

What conclusions does the author draw from his/her study of the issue or problem?

Do not forget:

- to use proper sentence connectors (cf. Course book),

- to use academic abbreviations, acronyms and expressions, such as:
 - e.g. ... for example (Slo. *npr.*)
 - i.e. ... that is (Slo. *tj.*)
 - inter alia ... among others (Slo. *med drugim*)
 - etc ... and so on (Slo. *itd.*)
 - ibid. ... in the same place (when quoting and stating reference, respectively)

 - p (pl. pp) ... page (pl. pages)
 - f (pl. ff) ... following/further page or pages
 - cf. ... confer or compare (Slo. *glej*)
 - et al ... and others

 - A oz. B ... **A or B, respectively**
A and B, respectively

- use details judiciously and do not give readers more details you think they will need to suit their primary goal in reading your abstract