

How to Write an Abstract

What is an abstract?

- A very concise, short summary of your completed work.
- Tells the reader what to expect.
- For many readers, this is the ONLY part that they will read.
- 200-300 words; Hard to write because it is short.
- Start with good science. But good science ≠ good abstract, unless having a good writing skill.
- Follow the specific instruction of the abstract guideline of specific journal/meeting. Focus on
 - What is the word limit? Usually 200-300 words
 - When is the death line?
 - How do I submit (type of file? Email or web-based?)
 - Can I put a figure or table in it?

Why do you want to write an abstract?

- Present initial information of the complete study.
- Discuss and receive feedback from others.
- Travel opportunities, grant opportunities.
- Build onto your CV
- A unique learning experience

Research abstract components

- Background
- Objective
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

Case abstract components

- Introduction
- Case description
- Discussion

Title

- A short, accurate. About the investigation.
- Usually 10-12 words
- No abbreviations
- Use title case (appropriate upper and lower case)
 - Lower case for these words: a, an, the, at, by, for, in, of, on, to, up, and, as, but, or, nor
- Non-standard title may be in the form of question, or telling the results

The scope of academic writing assignment (From easier to harder)

- In hospital
 - Class presentation
 - Internal reports
 - Regulatory report
- Conference
 - Abstract
 - Oral presentation
 - Poster presentation
- Journal articles
 - Case report
 - Letter to editor
 - Original research paper
 - Review article

Example of the background

- Ischemic etiology for heart failure is associated with worse survival in heart failure patients with reduced ejection fraction (EF), but this relationship is less well understood in those with preserved EF.
- Little is known about
- The has not been established.
- It is unclear how
- However, whether is unknown.

The word **abstract** comes from the Latin "abstractum", which means a condensed form of a longer piece of writing.

Objective

- A clear research primary question

Methods

- 3 sentences "What do you actually do to have a result" Detailed enough to judge the validity.
 - 1st sentence: Design, population, number of sample, time
 - 2nd-3rd sentence: Intervention, outcome measurement
 - 4th sentence: Statistical methods

Result

- 4 sentences "Data, number, no opinion"
 - 1st sentence: Describes the demographic data.
 - 2nd sentence: Primary outcome, detail enough to answer the primary objective/ hypothesis.
 - 3rd-4th sentences: Secondary outcome. List important other outcome variables.
- Should report in mean, SD, range, %, 95% confidence limits, Good to have p-values.

Conclusion

- 2-3 sentences
 - 1st sentence: Brief and concise answer of the primary objective: Supported by the data but do not restate the result.
 - 2nd sentence: Impact of the research to patient. Should not be overstated.

Good writing

- Perfect English (spelling and grammar)
- Do not begin sentences with numerals.
- Use passive voice in order to focus on findings.
- Limit abbreviations: Spelled out the first time.
 - The universal abbreviations can use right away e.g. mg/dl, mMol/L, ng/ml.
- Use generic name for the medication
- keep it simple: As short as possible. Use plain words. Be specific and concrete.
- Able to stand alone. Never use "will be discussed", "as showed in full article".
- The most important parts of abstract are title and conclusions

Thoughts

- Learning by doing. Practice, practice, practice.
- Find a helper – Attending staff, fellow, and resident.
- Ask someone (outside the field) to proof-read it.
- Read an abstract that were previously accepted to that journal or meeting.
- Start on the day that you think about the project e.g. title, background.
- Be flexible, no specific right or wrong way.