



## Writing APA Style Abstracts

An abstract is an accurate, self-contained, concise restatement of the content of a paper, article, document, book, thesis, or dissertation presented as a single block of text. Unlike the rest of the text, it does *not* begin with a paragraph indentation. The heading “Abstract” appears above it in normal (not bold) font. It presents the purpose, scope, methods, results, and conclusions of a research project briefly and clearly. Abstracts are often bound with theses and book-length manuscripts, and often serve as introductions to articles, but they are also published separately in digests and compilations.

### 1. General Guidelines

#### a.) Style

An abstract should be concise and clear even to the point of chopiness (readers do not expect the abstract to have the flow of the full text of the manuscript). Many periodicals have detail the required style, organization, and typographic format. Because research is conducted using keyword searches, embedding relevant keywords in the abstract is crucial. All abstracts are expected to be **accurate**, **self-contained**, and **concise**.

#### **Accurate**

The abstract should convey the objective, methods, results, and conclusions of a research project. It omits background information, the literature review, and details of procedures and methodologies.

#### **Self-contained**

Many abstracts are published independently of the complete paper in abstract journals or in online databases. Thus, an abstract might serve as the only means by which a researcher determines what information a paper contains. Moreover, a researcher might make a decision whether to read the paper or not based on the abstract alone. An abstract must therefore be designed to present a complete account of research even in the absence of the text it normally accompanies.

#### **Concise**

Never repeat the title in the abstract. Open with the most important concept or finding. Different bodies set different length limits on abstracts: Most journals expect a range of 150 to 250 words.

### 2. Study-Specific Guidelines

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) provides guidelines for five different types of papers: empirical studies, literature reviews/meta-analyses, theory-oriented papers, methodological papers, and case studies (Section 2.05).

**Empirical studies:** describe the problem investigated, the participants, the method, the findings, and the conclusions, including implications and applications.

**Literature review/Meta-analysis:** describe the problem investigated, the criteria for inclusion

of primary studies in the review, the participants in those studies, the results (with emphasis on effect size), conclusions and limitations, and implications.

**Theory-oriented papers:** explain the theory and its fundamental principles, as well as its applications to empirical results.

**Methodological papers:** outline the general class of methods being evaluated, specify the distinguishing features of the method being advocated, and indicate its range of application; if applicable, discuss the “robustness of power efficiency” (APA, p. 27) of statistical procedures involved.

**Case studies:** describe the key features of the subject under examination, the significance of the subject (its relation to a specific problem or issue), and the implications for further research.