

# *HOW TO WRITE AN ABSTRACT?*

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING A GOOD ABSTRACT

*'ABSTRACTS ARE ACADEMIC BUSINESS CARDS'*

When applying for an ISHA or another academic event, you are often expected to hand in an abstract, a short summary of your completed presentation/ research.

Abstracts are also required for submission of articles to journals, application for research grants and for completion and submission of theses.

At the same time, it is not so clear what to include in an abstract, especially when one is at the beginning of his/her studies.

Abstracts sometimes poorly written, often lack important information. For this reason, the International Board of ISHA decided to give you some advices about how to write a proper abstract.

**One should note that there is no fixed formula for writing an abstract. However, there are some basic components, institutional requirements and international academic standards concerning its style and content.**

We hope that these suggestions will help you conceptualize and prepare good abstracts.

Good luck!

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Vice-President 2016-2017

# WHEN IS IT NECESSARY TO WRITE ABSTRACTS?

Abstracts are required for:

- submission of proposals for conference papers
- submission of articles to journals
- application for research grants
- completion and submission of theses.

# WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

- An abstract is a concise summary of a research paper or entire thesis.
- It is an original work, not an excerpted passage.
- An abstract must be fully self-contained, short and a power statement that make sense by itself, without further reference to outside sources or to the actual paper.
- It highlights key content areas, your research purpose, the relevance or importance of your work (and its new, current aspects), and the main outcomes.
- The function of the abstract is to outline briefly all parts of the paper.
- It is a well-developed single paragraph of approximately 250 words in length (if there is no specific requirement), which is indented and single spaced.
- Strive for clarity, because your greatest challenge might be narrowing the topic.
- ***Special requirements for a thesis' abstract: it must be placed at the beginning of your paper.*** Although it is placed at the beginning of your paper, immediately following the title page, the abstract should be the last thing that you write, once you are sure of the conclusions you will reach.

# TYPES OF ABSTRACTS

If you are unsure which type of abstract you should write, ask your professor or read other abstracts in your field or in the journal where you are submitting your article.

- ***Descriptive abstracts:***

Some people consider it an outline of the work, rather than a summary. Descriptive abstracts are usually very short – 100 words or less – and they indicate the type of information found in the work. It makes no judgments about the work, nor does it provide results or conclusions of the research. It does incorporate key words found in the text and may include the purpose, methods, and scope of the research. They are not requested for applications.

- ***Informative abstracts:***

The majority of abstracts are informative, usually you have to write informative abstracts as applications.

While they still do not critique or evaluate a work, they do more than describe it.

A good informative abstract acts as a surrogate for the work itself. You need to present and explain all the main arguments and the important results and evidence in the complete research/paper.

An informative abstract includes the information that can be found in a descriptive abstract (purpose, methods, scope), but also includes the results and conclusions of the research and the recommendations of the author.

# WHY WRITE AN ABSTRACT?

For various reasons:

- If done well: your application/paper will be accepted, it makes the reader want to learn more about your research.
- Abstracts are important for both selection and indexing purposes.
- **Selection:** Abstracts allow readers who may be interested in the paper to quickly decide whether it is relevant to their purposes (whether it fits to the topic of the conference/publication) and whether they need to read the whole paper.
- **Indexing:** Most academic journal databases accessed through the library enable you to search abstracts. This allows for quick retrieval by users. Abstracts must incorporate the key terms that a potential researcher would use to search.

# WHAT TO INCLUDE IN AN INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT?

When preparing to write your abstract, keep the following key process elements in mind:

All abstracts generally cover the following sections, however the importance given to the different components can vary between disciplines or types of abstracts/applications.:

- Personal Data (Name, Academic title, Contact information)
- Name of your University/Department
- Title (brief, accurate, descriptive and comprehensive, focus on or incorporate keywords)
- Keywords (optional)

# 1. MOTIVATION/REASON FOR WRITING

- What is already known about the subject?
- What is the importance of the research?
- Why do we care about the problem?
- Why would a reader be interested in your larger work?



## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

- What problem does this work attempt to solve?
- What practical, scientific, theoretical gap is your research filling?
- What is the scope of the project?
- What is the main argument/thesis/claim?

# 3.METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

- What did you actually do to get your results? (e.g. analyzed 3 journals, novels, interviewed 17 students).
- You may include specific methodologies (models) or approaches used in the larger study.
- You may describe the types of sources used in the research.

# 4. RESULTS/FINDINGS (THESIS ABSTRACTS)

- As a result of completing the above procedure, what did you learn/ create?
- You may discuss the findings in a more general way and (or) include specific data that indicates the results of your project.

# 5.IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSION

- What are the larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem/gap identified in point 1?
- How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic?
- Are there any practical or theoretical applications from your findings or implications for future research?

# WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE?

- Whatever is present in the abstract must also be present in the text. Likewise, whatever errors should not be made in the text should not appear in the abstract.
- Citation of references anywhere within an abstract is almost invariably inappropriate.
- No visuals, figures, tables, diagrams.

# EDITING

- Taking time to write it well.
- Once you have finished the abstract, go through a careful editing stage.

Make sure your abstract

- fits within the word limit
- has a clear, declarative writing style (active verbs!), the results should be stated!
- does not contain any grammatical mistakes
- engage a proof reader (if needed).

# WORKS CITED AND USED

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- The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Abstracts.

URL: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/abstracts/>

Accessed 15 September 2016

# ONLINE SOURCES

- How to write an Abstract: Some useful tips.

URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pj3iMVRUx4>

Accessed 20 December 2016

- Writing an Abstract for your Research Paper

URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJOtR96RWX0>

Accessed 20 December 2016

- Writing an abstract - common mistakes

URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynUiPhi8qEc>

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