

Writing Scientific Abstracts

“Write with precision, clarity, and economy. Every sentence should convey the exact truth as simply as possible.”

I. Definition

An abstract is an abbreviated version of the paper for people who may never read the complete version.

II. Purpose

To summarize, in one paragraph, the major aspects of the paper including:

1. The main question/ the hypothesis/ the goal of the paper (1st or 2nd sentence)
2. The experimental design and methods (basic design)
3. The key findings/ results
 - identify trends
 - report findings that relate to the hypothesis/ question
4. Any interpretations/ conclusions
 - brief overview

These few sentences help the reader decide if he/she wants to read the entire paper.

III. Do's

- Keep it short. 100-250 words maximum.
- Use concise, complete sentences.
- Use active, past tense verbs.
- Use third person.
- Text only. No figures, tables, etc.
- Define abbreviations.
- Write it last. (The abstract is a final summary after you've written the paper.)

IV. Don't Do's

- Do not cite references.
- Do not repeat/ restate the idea of the title in the abstract.

Helpful Hint:

Take entire sentences or key phrases from each section and put them in sequence.
Reword by adding words, transitions, etc.