

How to Write an Abstract

What is an abstract?

An abstract is a short preview of your report, generally 150-250 words, intended to inform potential readers about your topic, research, and findings. It usually comes at the beginning of a paper and allows people to get a brief glimpse into the content of your research before reading your report in its entirety.

Abstracts are also commonly used as presentation proposals for academic conferences. The abstract gives conference organizers an idea of what you'd like to present. At times, the abstract is publicized in the conference program, so that attendees can decide whether to attend your session or someone else's. For these reasons, it's important that an abstract is a clearly written, focused overview of your report or presentation.

What to include in an abstract:

- A title that clearly indicates the focus of your report, presentation, or essay
- The research or data that you have incorporated into the report
- The methodology you used to collect data (if you are writing a scientific report) or the logical structure or theoretical framework from which you are writing your argument (if you are writing an essay in the humanities)
- Your findings, if you are writing a scientific report; your argument, if you are writing an essay in the humanities
- If you have space, a hint to the implications of your findings or the general importance of your argument

A good exercise for writing an abstract is to continually answer the question "What is my report/paper/presentation about?" or, more accurately, "What does my report/paper/presentation *do*?"

What NOT to include in an abstract:

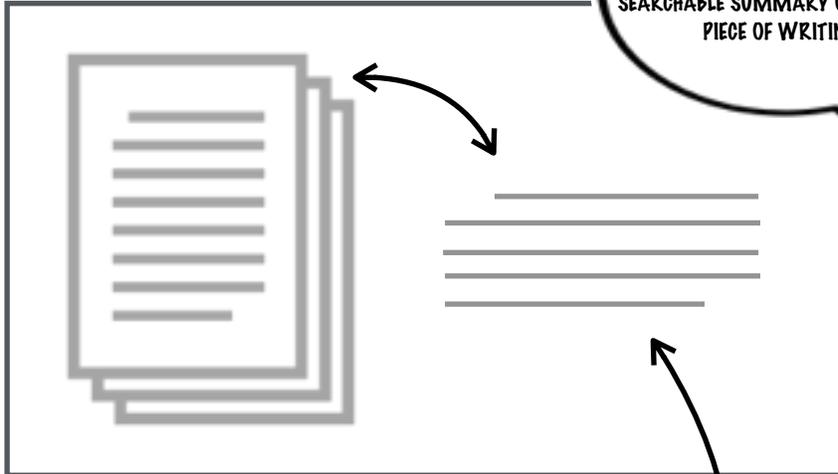
- Too much detail. An abstract should give an overview of the report or presentation, with special attention to the data/research you use and the conclusions you draw

For additional information and examples of abstracts in the sciences and humanities, please see:

<http://urc.ucdavis.edu/howtowriteanabstract.html>

WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

AN ABSTRACT IS A SHORT, CLEAR, AND SEARCHABLE SUMMARY OF A LARGER PIECE OF WRITING.



Developing an individual and collective self-efficacy scale for the teaching of writing in high schools

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ABSTRACT

The study reported on here focuses on self-efficacy in relation to high-school teachers' teaching of writing. 140 New Zealand teachers from four schools completed a teacher-of-writing self-efficacy scale (TWSSES) based on a rhetorical model of the writing process and incorporating five hypothesized dimensions. An initial principal components analysis was undertaken on 25 individual self-efficacy items to investigate the dimensionality of the data and the extent to which it reflected the dimensions hypothesized. A two-component solution emerged, termed "pre-writing instructional strategies" (accounting for 52% of total variance) and "compositional strategy demonstration" (7% of variance). Further principal components analyses conducted on groups of items deemed to be thematically coherent, that loaded on each component, confirmed that the data set for each group, treated separately to any other items, was approximately uni-dimensional. Measurement scales were calibrated to each group of items, and served as the dependent variables for comparisons of teachers' self-efficacy in different subjects. Statistically significant variations occurred in the resultant scale locations for teachers of English, the humanities, science and mathematics. The study findings have implications for the teaching of writing as conceptualized in the secondary school, and indicate a value in viewing disciplinary literacies in rhetorical terms.

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Have you ever searched for an article through the library website and come across something like this? Many scientific articles include abstracts at the beginning.

If you're ever unsure about whether your abstract...

- has enough/helpful keywords
- identifies your problem, thesis, research, & data
- is accurate, self-contained, concise & specific, non-evaluative, and coherent & readable

feel free to come talk to a writing consultant!

WHAT SHOULD AN ABSTRACT INCLUDE?



KEY WORDS & PHRASES: an abstract helps a reader know what your paper is about RIGHT AWAY! Key words and phrases help orient the reader.



TOPIC/PROBLEM under investigation, the **THESIS**, and **RESEARCH** or **DATA** used: This information will help your reader know the difference between your paper and another paper on a similar topic.



An abstract should be **ACCURATE**, **SELF-CONTAINED**, **CONCISE & SPECIFIC**, **NON-EVALUATIVE**, and **COHERENT & READABLE**.