WRITING CENTER
Academic Enrichment & Support Center

Creating an APA Abstract

What is an abstract?

A brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of an article.

How long should an abstract be?

120 words or less.

Why do I need an abstract?

Abstracts allow readers to survey the contents of an article quickly, and enable abstracting and information services to index and retrieve articles. When people are using an online database, they often skim abstracts. Based on the abstract, researchers often decide whether to read the entire article.

What makes a good abstract?

- Accuracy
  - The abstract should reflect the contents of the manuscript.
- Self-contained style
  - Define abbreviations (except units of measurement) and acronyms
  - Spell out names of tests and drugs (use generic names for drugs)
  - Define unique terms
  - Paraphrase rather than quote
  - Include names of authors (initials and surnames) and dates of publication in citations of other publication.
- Concision and specificity
  - Make each sentence "maximally informative" (especially the lead sentence)
  - Be brief
  - Begin the abstract with the most important information
  - Include the 4 or 5 most important concepts, findings, or implications
- Non-evaluative language
  - Do not add or comment on what is in the body of the manuscript.
  - Report, do not evaluate
- Coherence and readability
  - Use 3rd person rather than 1st
  - Avoid metadiscourse (i.e. "In this paper I try to prove…")

Ask yourself these questions when writing the abstract:

- Why would another researcher be interested in this research?
- What are the most important aspects of the research? What should a reader be sure to know about the research?
- What information will the reader have to have in order to understand the most important aspects?

Sample abstract and format on back ---------->>

Sample abstract

Construction sites are major contributors to nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. However, a lack of personnel to enforce erosion control regulations means that few developers apply effective erosion control. New approaches are needed to increase erosion control on construction sites if this source of NPS pollution is to be significantly reduced. This study tests whether an economic advantage exists for developers who use vegetative cover for erosion control, independent of advantages gained in addressing environmental or regulatory concerns. A market survey shows that homebuyers and realtors perceive vegetated lots to be worth more than unvegetated lots, and this increased value exceeds the cost of seeding. Thus, developers can now be encouraged to invest in vegetative cover because of the potentially high return on the investment.

Format of sample abstract:

[*NOTE: DO NOT separate the abstract in your paper. This section is separated to illustrate the abstract's structure.]

Introduction: Construction sites are major contributors to nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. However, a lack of personnel to enforce erosion control regulations means that few developers apply effective erosion control.

Research: Problem New approaches are needed to increase erosion control on construction sites if this source of NPS pollution is to be significantly reduced.

Body: This study tests whether an economic advantage exists for developers who use vegetative cover for erosion control, independent of advantages gained in addressing environmental or regulatory concerns.

Results: A market survey shows that homebuyers and realtors perceive vegetated lots to be worth more than unvegetated lots, and this increased value exceeds the cost of seeding.

Conclusion: Thus, developers can now be encouraged to invest in vegetative cover because of the potentially high return on the investment.

Some information and examples on this handout are adapted from the APA Style Manual and Purdue's Online Writing Lab.