

# Abstracts

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An abstract is a brief summary of a paper, usually spanning between 100 and 250 words. Since they are limited in length, abstracts typically cover the thesis statement and major points of a paper – but not much else. A sentence introducing the topic and another summarizing the implications of the paper may also be appropriate. When writing an abstract, first consider the MAP (the **M**essage, **A**udience, and **P**urpose of the rhetorical situation):

**Message:** What is the message of your paper? In an abstract you will boil down the overall message of your paper, reports, presentation, study, or research. This will likely include your thesis and major premises or points.

**Audience:** Consider who will be reading your abstract. Are they experts in the field you're discussing? Or do you need to give background information on your topic? Do you need to persuade your readers about the importance of your paper?

**Purpose:** Are you proposing a paper or presentation you plan to complete? Or are you summarizing or describing a completed work?

The answers to these questions will help you determine whether you are writing an abstract of a **study**, **descriptive** abstract of a research paper or argument, or a **proposal** abstract.

<b>Study (Scientific) Abstract</b>	<b>Research/Argument Abstract</b>	<b>Proposal Abstract</b>
Type of study Methodology (how study was conducted) Findings Explanation of findings Conclusions and/or implications	Topic or subject Argument/thesis Summary of the paper's major points Implications	Topic or subject Methodology for the planned study or Summary of the planned paper

## Keep in Mind...

- An abstract is *not* the same as the introductory paragraph. An intro provides a brief overview of the topic and context and often ends with the thesis statement. An abstract, on the other hand, provides a summary of the entire paper. In many ways, an abstract should resemble the paper's outline represented in one paragraph.
- Be clear and concise. Avoid wordiness and repetition so that every sentence is impactful.
- Only refer to information that is actually in your paper. You don't want to give the impression that you're writing about something you're not.
- Avoid using the first person "I" or "we" in your abstract. Also avoid jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations that your audience won't understand.
- For information on formatting an abstract in APA, see the "APA Documentation" handout.
- Remember to check your syllabus for additional directions about how to format your abstract. Some professors may have personal preferences about what to include; defer to your professor for specific guidelines.