

Writing an Abstract

As part of communicating your research, you may be asked to produce an abstract, either to stand alone or as part of a larger document. An abstract is a brief summary of your research, and if it's written as part of a scientific paper, you'll often have a strict word limit to abide by.

Where to start

- **What's expected of you?** Make sure you know what you're expected to produce. Most importantly, check what your word limit is and stick to it!
- **Read a few abstracts.** This will give you an indication of how much information can be communicated in relatively few words.
- **The important parts.** Think about what the most important aspects of your research were and make sure you include these.
- **Don't waffle.** Because of the strict word limits imposed on abstracts, there's no room for waffle. Know what message you want to get across and make sure you do.
- **Stress the uniqueness of your work.** Research should be novel, particularly if you want to publish your results. Make sure you point out the novel aspect of your work as early in the document as possible.

Content

- **Introduction.** Why have you done the work? Why is this particular area so important?
- **Materials and Methods.** The most important aspects of what you've done and how you've done it. Unlike a full materials and methods section, you shouldn't go into a lot of detail, just give the reader a flavour of your work
- **Results.** Mention one or two important results rather than try to explain every trend you've discovered
- **Discussion/Conclusion.** Again, stress the novelty of your work and the importance of your results.