

Writing an Abstract

For longer research papers, dissertations and theses, writing an abstract is an essential part of the process, as it summarizes the entire research paper.

The abstract allows a researcher to evaluate quickly the content of your paper, and judge if it is relevant to their [research](#).

As a result, an abstract needs to convey a complete synopsis of the paper, but within a word tight limit. This strict restriction is where the difficulties lie.

You will be given a maximum word count for an abstract, such as 200 words, and it is **essential** that you remain within this limit.

Nowadays, scientific papers are generally placed onto a database, with strict limits on the number of words, and an overlong abstract risks the entire paper becoming rejected.

Writing an abstract includes briefly [introducing](#) the general topic of the work and then explaining the exact [research question](#), including the aims. It should then include a brief description of the [methodology](#), the [results](#) and the [discussion](#).

You should try to stick to the exact research question answered, and avoid including your own personal interpretations - if people believe that your paper is relevant they will come across those in due course.

The same applies with the [methodology](#) - you could, for example, state that you used chromatography as part of the [experiment](#). If somebody decides that your paper is relevant, they will find out exactly what type of chromatography you used in the method section.

Fitting all of this into a very restrictive word count can be very difficult, and it is a very daunting task. An overlong abstract is one of the easiest traps to fall into, so the key is to give yourself plenty of time.

Start writing an abstract without worrying too much about the word limit, making sure that you include all of the information that you believe to be relevant. Leave it for a day or two and then you can start upon a harsh edit.

With fresh eyes, you will see that some of the information is irrelevant and can be cut. You can take out some of the descriptive words and chop sentences down to their bare bones.

On the other hand, if your abstract is excessively short, then you have probably missed a lot of information out. Re-check, and see you have missed anything out, referring to your [outline](#) if you are not sure.

You can also ask another student to read it for you, as an independent assessor. If they cannot make any sense of your abstract, then it is back to the drawing board.