

## 431/Beverly/Abstract Assignment

### How to Write an Abstract

Abstracts are a summary. Therefore, an abstract should cover the main points of the article. Abstracts are typically 150 to 250 words. There are different types of abstracts. The type that most closely fits this assignment is the Informative Abstract.

#### A well-written Informative Abstract has the following characteristics:

1. An Informative Abstract summarizes specific information from an article; it does not add information. Technical language is used and the style closely matches that of the original article.
2. The abstract must include the purpose, method, results, and discussion/conclusions from the article, typically presented in this same order.
3. The abstract is short, often only a paragraph or two depending upon the length of the article being abstracted. Each paragraph is well-developed, coherent and concise. Use transitions sparingly to assist the reader in following the organization.
4. The abstract should provide enough key details that the reader can recall information without re-reading the article.
5. Unlike other writing, passive verbs are often used to focus on important information and downplay the author.
6. Abstracts are dense. Often sentences are long and full of details. The abstract should include key statistical detail, typically means and standard deviations or p values but not entire ANOVA results. Don't sacrifice numerical facts to make the abstract brief.
7. Introductory information from the article is often not included. Definitions and other background information are omitted if they are not the major focus of the report.
8. Do not include an citations of sources in the abstract.
9. Abstracts begin with a one-sentence summary of the main point of the article. The first sentence (or two) of the abstract describes the purpose of the study. This can be a lot of information to condense into a sentence or two, and so the concise statement of the main idea often takes careful revision.

#### Steps for Writing Effective Abstracts:

1. Read the article.
2. Reread the article with the goal of abstracting in mind.
3. Look specifically for the main parts of the article- the purpose, method, results, discussion and conclusions.
4. Use the headings as a guide to writing your abstract.
5. After you've finished re-reading the article, write a rough draft **without looking back** at what you're abstracting.
6. Don't merely copy key sentences from the article. You'll put in too much or too little information and **this is plagiarism!**
7. Don't rely on the way material was phrased in the article. Instead, summarize information in a new way. Again, **avoid plagiarism!**
8. Revise your rough draft to:
  - a) correct weaknesses in organization.
  - b) improve transitions from point to point.
  - c) drop unnecessary information.
  - d) add important information you left out.
  - e) eliminate wordiness.
  - f) fix errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
10. Print your final copy and read it again to catch errors.