

**Academic Success Center
Thomas Jefferson University
East Falls Campus**

WRITING AN ABSTRACT

Definition:

An abstract is an especially terse summary, usually of a report or an article. A well-prepared abstract contains enough information to be considered a highly condensed version of the entire paper.

Functions:

An abstract gives readers a quick, brief, reliable overview of contents of a report or article in a professional journal. When it accompanies an article, the abstract is often included in electronic databases and becomes an important reference tool for future researchers. An abstract enables readers to analyze the contents and methodology of a paper very carefully.

Preparing to write an abstract:

A good abstract will convey the main point and the structure of a paper. It will make clear exactly what each part contributes to the whole. Therefore, it is best written after the paper is completed.

Typically, an abstract is written as a single well-organized paragraph. Most abstracts are approximately 250 words long. An abstract never includes:

- Any material not in the text, including figures, tables, or references.
- Instructions on how to follow specific methods or use apparatus.
- References to sources.

An abstract of a scientific research report will include:

1. The objectives and purposes of the study.
2. The materials, methods, techniques, apparatus, and their uses, as well as new items and new uses of standard techniques and equipment.
3. Scientific and common names of organisms.
4. Specific drugs, biochemical compounds, etc., including manner of use and route of administration.
5. New theories, terminology, interpretations, or evaluations--all stated very concisely.

An abstract of a social science research report will include:

1. The problem, question, or hypothesis to be investigated.
2. The methods used, including participants, procedures, and materials.
3. Synopsis of support drawn from literature, data, and reasoning.
4. Description of results.
5. The significance of the results.