



WRITING AN ABSTRACT

An abstract is a stand-alone statement that enables readers to obtain an overview of your whole work. It resembles your conclusion more than your introduction.

An abstract should

- briefly convey all the essential information of your essay or thesis,
- present the objective, methods, results, and conclusions of a research project,
- contain all the key terms associated with your research,
- have a succinct, non-repetitive style,
- be no more than 1 page (150-300 words) in length.



The abstract comes **first** in your paper, but you write it **last**.

1 Begin with a draft

2 Group information

3 Rephrase

4 Revise

1 Begin with a draft

Begin with a draft of your whole essay:

- Highlight the objectives and conclusions from your Introduction and Conclusion
- Underline keywords from the Methods section
- Highlight results and findings from the Discussion section.

2 Group information

Group the above information into a single paragraph, then

- Condense any definitions or explanations
- Delete repeated words and phrases
- Condense any background information to address only the gap your research is filling.

3 Rephrase

Rephrase so that the abstract begins with your specific findings (i.e. your conclusions), rather than an introduction to the topic in general.

4 Revise

Revise once more to ensure your abstract contains only essential information, in the fewest possible words, and cut out the obvious, such as "This paper examines..." or "The first chapter provides a description of ..."



Related resources:
Literature Review

Student Learning Support Service
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Difference between Introduction and Abstract

Introduction:

Introduces the paper and previews the main issues to discuss.

- Background
- Purpose
- Thesis statement
- Outline of key issues
- Scope of paper

Abstract:

Summarises the whole paper and offers an overview of what was done and what was found

- Background
- Purpose, aims
- Methods
- Results/Findings
- Conclusions
- Implications

Structuring your Abstract



Reading many abstracts from your field can help you get a sense of the structure you need to use for your abstract.



1 Topic and Motivating background

This is where you address what the reader needs to know about your topic:

- * What is the broad topic of your study?
- * Take the reader from general topic to the specific issue

2 Addressing the gap

This is where you situate your research:

- * What gap does the current research leave?
- * What gap does your research address?

3 Findings and methods

This is the section where you address what you found and what you did

- * Methods for data collection - What was done?
- * Summarise research questions and aims
- * Results of your study - What was found?

4 Thesis and Implications

- * What is your main argument?
- * Why does your research matter? (to your field, beyond your field)

Overall structure of Abstract

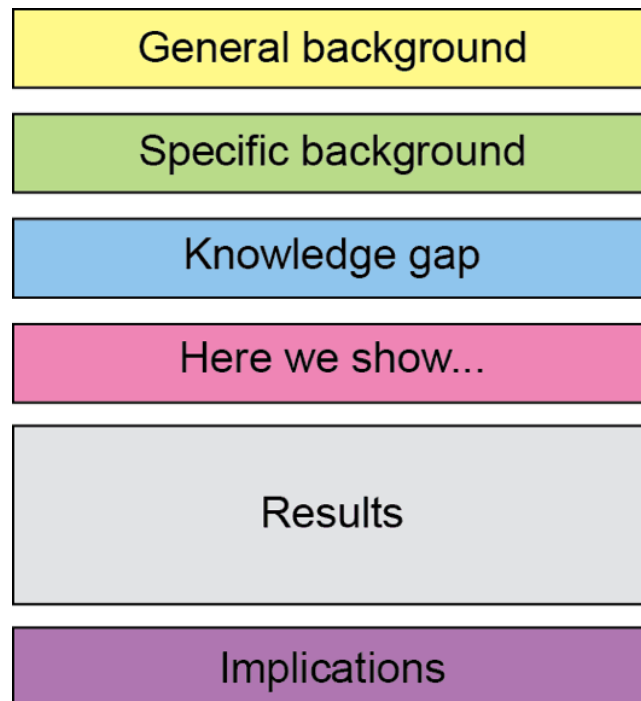


Image from: <https://mitcommlab.mit.edu/be/commkit/journal-article-abstract/>

Sample Abstract

Anthropologists have criticized the commercial Polynesian luau for inauthenticity, for creating and staging “native bodies” and for “prostituting culture.” Other scholars, however, have noted that cultural tourism can be utilized to help revive culture, especially when traditional practices are being abandoned for more commercial employment. Since the Polynesian Luau is a well-known form of cultural tourism it has been the subject of some of this discussion, yet the discourse has been from a removed standpoint. Thus, there is a lack of information about the perspectives of the dancers employed in these shows. How do they feel about their cultural representations? How involved are they in their own understanding of their Polynesian heritage and their cultural identity? I will address the ethnographic results of my research with dancers involved in a tourist Polynesian luau show in Orlando, Florida. I will show that cultural identity can be created and bolstered through a venue of cultural tourism, especially in a diaspora community. Based on interviews with dancers of this luau I have found that there is a significant level of involvement in Polynesian culture outside of their workplace. Furthermore, many of the dancers have mentioned that while they may have grown up in the dance, they had abandoned dance until they realized that they could gain employment in a commercial luau. Thus, I propose dancers and performers can use cultural tourism as a way of reinforcing Polynesian identity and continuing their involvement in traditional cultural values.

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