# 1, Writing an Abstract for the Research Paper

**Definition and Purpose of Abstracts.**

An abstract is a short summary of your (published or unpublished) research paper, usually about a paragraph (c. 6-7 sentences, 150-250 words) long. A well-written abstract serves multiple purposes:

* an abstract lets readers get the gist or essence of your paper or article quickly, in order to decide whether to read the full paper;
* an abstract prepares readers to follow the detailed information, analyses, and arguments in your full paper;
* and, later, an abstract helps readers remember key points from your paper.

It’s also worth remembering that search engines and bibliographic databases use abstracts, as well as the title, to identify key terms for indexing your published paper. So what you include in your abstract and in your title are crucial for helping other researchers find your paper or article.

If you are writing an abstract for a course paper, your professor may give you specific guidelines for what to include and how to organize your abstract. Similarly, academic journals often have specific requirements for abstracts. So in addition to following the advice on this page, you should be sure to look for and follow any guidelines from the course or journal you’re writing for.

## The Contents of an Abstract

Abstracts contain most of the following kinds of information in brief form. The body of your paper will, of course, develop and explain these ideas much more fully. As you will see in the samples below, the proportion of your abstract that you devote to each kind of information—and the sequence of that information—will vary, depending on the nature and genre of the paper that you are summarizing in your abstract. And in some cases, some of this information is implied, rather than stated explicitly. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which is widely used in the social sciences, gives specific guidelines for what to include in the abstract for different kinds of papers—for empirical studies, literature reviews or meta-analyses, theoretical papers, methodological papers, and case studies.

Here are the typical kinds of information found in most abstracts:

1. the **context** or background information for your research; the **general topic** under study; the **specific topic** of your research
2. the **central questions** or statement of the **problem** your research addresses
3. **what’s already known** about this question, what **previous research** has done or shown
4. the main **reason(s)**, the exigency, the **rationale**, the **goals** for your research—Why is it important to address these questions? Are you, for example, examining a new topic? Why is that topic worth examining? Are you filling a gap in previous research? Applying new methods to take a fresh look at existing ideas or data? Resolving a dispute within the literature in your field? . . .
5. your research and/or analytical **methods**
6. your main **findings**, **results**, or **arguments**
7. the **significance** or **implications** of your findings or arguments.

Your abstract should be intelligible on its own, without a reader’s having to read your entire paper. And in an abstract, you usually do not cite references—most of your abstract will describe what you have studied in your research and what you have found and what you argue in your paper. In the body of your paper, you will cite the specific literature that informs your research.

## When to Write Your Abstract

Although you might be tempted to write your abstract first because it will appear as the very first part of your paper, it’s a good idea to wait to write your abstract until after you’ve drafted your full paper, so that you know what you’re summarizing.

What follows are some sample abstracts in published papers or articles, all written by faculty at UW-Madison who come from a variety of disciplines. We have annotated these samples to help you see the work that these authors are doing within their abstracts.

# 2, How to write an original research paper (and get it published)

### Introduction

The Introduction sets the stage for your presentation. It has three parts: what is known, what is unknown, and what your burning question, hypothesis, or aim is. Keep this section short, and write for a general audience (clear, concise, and as nontechnical as you can be). How would you explain to a distant colleague why and how you did the study? Take your readers through the three steps ending with your specific question. Emphasize how your study fills in the gaps (the unknown), and explicitly state your research question. Do not answer the research question. Remember to leave details, descriptions, speculations, and criticisms of other studies for the Discussion.

### Methods

The Methods section gives a clear overview of what you did. Give enough information that your readers can evaluate the persuasiveness of your study. Describe the steps you took, as in a recipe, but be wary of too much detail. If you are doing qualitative research, explain how you picked your subjects to be representative.

You may want to break it into smaller sections with subheadings, for example, context: when, where, authority or approval, sample selection, data collection (how), follow-up, method of analysis. Cite a reference for commonly used methods or previously used methods rather than explaining all the details. Flow diagrams and tables can simplify explanations of methods.

You may use first person voice when describing your methods.

### Results

The Results section summarizes what the data show. Point out relationships, and describe trends. Avoid simply repeating the numbers that are already available in the tables and figures. Data should be restricted to tables as much as possible. Be the friendly narrator, and summarize the tables; do not write the data again in the text. For example, if you had a demographic table with a row of ages, and age was not significantly different among groups, your text could say, “The median age of all subjects was 47 years. There was no significant difference between groups (Table).” This is preferable to, “The mean age of group 1 was 48.6 (7.5) years and group 2 was 46.3 (5.8) years, a nonsignificant difference.”

Break the Results section into subsections, with headings if needed. Complement the information that is already in the tables and figures. And remember to repeat and highlight in the text only the most important numbers. Use the active voice in the Results section, and make it lively. Information about what you did belongs in the Methods section, not here. And reserve comments on the meaning of your results for the Discussion section.

Other tips to help you with the Results section:

* ▪ If you need to cite the number in the text (not just in the table), and the total in the group is less than 50, do not include percentage. Write “7 of 34,” not “7 (21%).”
* ▪ Do not forget, if you have multiple comparisons, you probably need adjustment. Ask your statistician if you are not sure.

### Discussion

The Discussion section gives you the most freedom. Most authors begin with a brief reiteration of what they did. Every author should restate the key findings and answer the question noted in the Introduction. Focus on what your data prove, not what you hoped they would prove. Start with “We found that…” (or something similar), and explain what the data mean. Anticipate your readers' questions, and explain why your results are of interest.

Then compare your results with other people's results. This is where that literature review you did comes in handy. Discuss how your findings support or challenge other studies.

You do not need every article from your literature review listed in your paper or reference list, unless you are writing a narrative review or systematic review. Your manuscript is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the topic. Do not provide a long review of the literature –discuss only previous work that is directly pertinent to your findings. Contrary to some beliefs, having a long list in the References section does not mean the paper is more scholarly; it does suggest the author is trying to look scholarly. (If your article is a systematic review, the citation list might be long.)

Other parts of your research paper include:

**Tables and figures** are the foundation for your story. They are the story. Editors, reviewers, and readers usually look at titles, abstracts, and tables and figures first. Figures and tables should stand alone and tell a complete story. Your readers should not need to refer back to the main text.

**Abstracts** can be free-form or structured with subheadings. Always follow the format indicated by the publisher; the JMLA uses structured abstracts for research articles. The main parts of an abstract may include introduction (background, question or hypothesis), methods, results, conclusions, and implications. So begin your abstract with the background of your study, followed by the question asked. Next, give a quick summary of the methods used in your study. Key results come next with limited raw data if any, followed by the conclusion, which answers the questions asked (the take-home message).

**3. SUMMARY**

**Sidorova A. Psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities in the local social service centre**

The qualification work consists of an introduction, 2 parts, findings, a list of references (86 items), and 4 addenda on 10 pages. The qualification work volume is 110 pages long, 90 of them – the main text. There are 16 tables and 1 illustration.

The qualifying work gives the theoretical survey and describes the experimental research of psychological practices with children with disabilities in the local social service centre.

The research object is the process of psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities.

The research subject: the content, forms and methods of the psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities in the local social service centre.

The research purpose: theoretical foundation and experimental verification of the content, forms and methods of the psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities in the local social service centre.

The research tasks are:

1. to reveal the essence of the notion of «disability» in scientific literature;
2. to characterize the practices of psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities in Ukraine;
3. to expose the role of a psychologist in the process of rehabilitation of a child with disabilities;
4. to develop and implement a program of improving the adaptive capacity of the child with disabilities in the activities of the children’s department of the local social service centre;
5. to verify the effectiveness of the implemented program.

The part 1 “Theoretical bases of psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities” reveals the essence of a phenomenon of child’s disability as a modern issue; highlights the features of the system of psychological rehabilitation of children with disabilities in Ukraine; determines the role of psychology in the rehabilitation of children with disabilities.

The part 2 “Experimental work on the rehabilitation of children with disabilities in the local social service centre” shows the results of indicative, formative and control phases of the research of improving the adaptive capacity of the child with disabilities in the conditions of the local social service centre.

The analysis of the results has proved the effectiveness of formulated and implemented programme.

**Keywords:** child with disability, local social service centre, psychological rehabilitation, adaptive capacity.