

Lesson One: Main Features of Abstracts

1. Introduction

An abstract is an essential piece of any academic or professional research paper. This concise synopsis serves as an overview or a summary of the content of the research paper. Thus, it should appropriately represent the main ideas discussed in the paper and meet the expectations of the readers. The APA publication manual (2010) holds that the abstract should function just like the title of the research, but it includes the main finding of the research.

2. Characteristics of an abstract: A good abstract should be:

a. Concise but filled with information. Each sentence must be written with maximum impact in mind. To keep your abstract short, focus on including just four or five of the essential points, concepts, or findings.

b. Objective and accurate. The abstract's purpose is to report rather than provide commentary. It should also accurately reflect what your paper is about. Only include information that is also included in the body of your paper.

c. Short. According to the APA style manual, an abstract should be between 150 to 250 words. The abstract should also be written as only one paragraph with no indentation.

d. Structure the abstract in the same order as your paper. Begin with a brief summary of the Introduction, and then continue on with a summary of the Method, Results, and Discussion sections of your paper.

e. Write a rough draft of your abstract. While you should aim for brevity, be careful not to make your summary too short. Try to write one to two sentences summarizing each section of your paper. Once you have a rough draft, you can edit for length and clarity.

2. Steps of writing an abstract

An abstract of a research paper enables the reader to have a clear idea about the most crucial points of the research which are explained by many scholars. According to Swales and Feak (2010, p. 174) much recent work in discourse analysis has investigated the number of “rhetorical moves” (or communicative stages) in abstracts in various fields—and in various languages. Most researchers identify a potential total of five moves.

Move # Typical labels

Implied questions

Move 1 Background/introduction/situation

what do we know about the topic?

Move 2 Present research/purpose	what is this study about?
Move 3 Methods/materials/subjects/procedures	how was it done?
Move 4 Results/findings	what was discovered?
Move 5 Discussion/conclusion/significance	what do the findings mean?

4. Types of abstracts

There are two main approaches to writing RP abstracts. One we will call **the results driven abstract because it concentrates on the research findings** and what might be concluded from them. The other approach is to offer an **RP summary abstract in which you provide one- or two-sentence synopses of each sections of the paper**. RP abstracts can be characterized as either *indicative* (describe what was done) or *informative* (include the main findings) A descriptive abstract is akin to a table of contents in a paragraph form, Informative abstracts are generally used for documents pertaining to experimental investigations, inquiries, or surveys.

5. Templates for abstract writing

a. *Expressing purpose:*

The central thesis of this paper is that ...

Specifically, the following issues will be addressed:....

Secondly, the study aims to assess the extent to which ...

The specific objective of this study was to ...

This thesis examines the way in which the ...

An objective of this study was to investigate ...

This study set out to investigate the usefulness of ...

This dissertation seeks to explain the development of ...

This case study seeks to examine the changing nature of ...

The objectives of this research are to determine whether ...

The overall aim of this thesis is to review the evidence for ...

This paper argues that ...

This paper gives an account of ...

This paper discusses the case of ...

This paper analyses the impact of ...

This paper attempts to show that ...

This paper contests the claim that ...

This paper provides an overview of ...

The paper reviews the evidence for ...

This paper reports on a study which ...

This paper addresses the question of ...

This paper presents new evidence for ...

This paper traces the development of ...

This paper explores the ways in which ...

This paper assesses the significance of ...

This paper highlights the importance of ...

This paper considers the implications of ...

b. *Expressing the method used:*

The method: implemented

used in this research is

Utilized

Applied

Adopted

Put in service

b. *Highlighting results:*

Interestingly, the X was observed to ...

Example of a Master Dissertation Abstract Entitled ‘ Investigating the Correlation between EFL Students’ Mindsets and their L2 Motivation’

Abstract

The significant role played by motivation in shaping students’ academic achievement made it a subject of interest for several researchers. More precisely, associating L2 learning motivation with a certain stimulus has long been an issue of concern in academic contexts. In essence, the present study aims to investigate the correlation between EFL students’ Mindset type and their second language learning

motivation. In pursuance of this aim, third year LMD students at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University were selected as the target population of the study. A correlational research was conducted, whereby two questionnaires were administered to the informants in presence of the researchers. An 8-Items version of Mindset Scale, mainly developed by Carol Dweck (2000) which was used to determine to what type of Mindset, fixed or the growth, the participants lean to, along with an L2 Motivational Self-System scale developed by Taguchi (2009) which is predicated on Dornyei's work that attempted to examine the informants' motivational profile. The results obtained from the quantitative examination of the gathered data revealed that the massive majority of participants are endorsed in a Growth Mindset charging their motivation from their linguistic self-confidence. Further, the most striking result affirmed that there is a weakly positive correlation between students' Mindset type, more specifically Growth Mindset, and their motivation to learn the second language. On account of these findings, some pedagogical implications are suggested to teachers and course designers to consider the cultivation of Growth Mindset in the teaching-learning contexts and, by extension, to boost students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language.