

## WRITING AN ABSTRACT

### What is an Abstract?

- An abstract is a short descriptive or informative summary of a report, article or thesis.
- It is written after the text is completed, although it is intended to be read first.
- In a technical report, the abstract appears on a separate page after the table of contents and list of illustrations.
- In an essay or an article written in a field of humanities, it should appear on a separate page, just after the title page and therefore just before the text itself.
- It reveals the gist of the main text and helps readers decide whether they want to read the report, article or paper.

### Two types of abstracts:

#### Descriptive abstracts

- tell readers what information the report, article, or paper contains.
- include the purpose, methods, and scope.
- do not provide results, conclusions, or recommendations. (Readers who would like to read the author's results, conclusions, or recommendations must read the whole text.)
- are always very short, usually about 100-120 words.

#### Informative abstracts

- communicate more specific information from the report, article, or paper.
- include the purpose, methods, and scope.
- also provide the results, conclusions, and recommendations.
- are 10% or less of the length of the original piece. The length of an abstract depends on the length of the original work.

### **An effective abstract:**

- uses one or more well-developed paragraphs: these are unified, coherent and concise
- includes an introduction/body/conclusion which present a paper's purpose and results (and conclusions and recommendations) in that order.
- provides logical connections or transitions.
- adds no new information, but simply summarizes the original work.
- is understandable to a wide audience.
- often uses passive verbs to downplay the author and emphasize the information.
- includes enough number of key words as instructed in the journal guidelines.

### **Steps for Writing Effective Abstracts**

Rereading the article, paper, or report with the goal of abstracting it would be the first step to preparing an abstract. While reading the original work, consider specifically the main parts, i.e. purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions, and recommendation. You may use these main parts as a guide to writing your abstract. After rereading the paper, write a rough draft for the abstract.

- Do not merely copy key sentences from the paper.
- Do not rely on the way material was phrased in the paper; instead, summarize the information in a new way.

Revise your rough draft to

- improve transitions from point to point.
- drop unnecessary information.
- add important information you may have left out.
- avoid wordiness and details.