

Writing Report Abstracts

TYPES OF ABSTRACTS

There are two types of abstracts: informational and descriptive.

Informational Abstracts

- communicate contents of reports
- include purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions, and recommendations
- highlight essential points
- are short--from a paragraph to a page or two, depending upon the length of the report (10% or less of the report)
- allow readers to decide whether they want to read the report

Descriptive Abstracts

- tell what the report contains
- include purpose, methods, scope, but NOT results, conclusions, and recommendations
- are always very short-- usually under 100 words
- introduce subject to readers, who must then read the report to learn study results

QUALITIES OF A GOOD ABSTRACT

An effective abstract

- uses one or more well-developed paragraphs, which are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone
- uses an introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: purpose, findings, conclusions, recommendations
- follows strictly the chronology of the report
- provides logical connections between material included
- adds no new information but simply summarizes the report
- is intelligible to a wide audience