



Lesson 6: Writing Abstracts

Introduction

In academic writing, an abstract is often the first part that readers see, yet it is usually written last. It provides a short and clear summary of a research paper, article, thesis, or project. In human sciences such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, anthropology, communication studies, and education abstracts are essential because they help readers quickly understand the purpose, importance, and results of a study. A well-written abstract allows researchers to decide whether the full text is relevant to their interests.

This lesson introduces students to the meaning, purpose, structure, and key features of academic abstracts.

2. What Is an Abstract?

An abstract is a brief overview of a research study. It presents the main ideas in a condensed form and usually appears at the beginning of the document.

It answers basic academic questions such as:

- What is the study about?
- Why is it important?
- What methods were used?
- What are the key findings?
- What is the main conclusion?

An abstract should be short, factual, and objective, without unnecessary detail.

3. Purpose of an Abstract

Abstracts serve several academic functions:

a. Provide a quick summary

Readers can understand the essential information without reading the full paper.



b. Help with academic searching

Abstracts appear in journals, academic databases, and online catalogues, helping researchers find relevant studies.

c. Clarify the research focus

They guide readers toward the paper's purpose, scope, and significance.

d. Represent the entire work

Many people decide to read or not read a study based on the abstract alone.

4. Types of Abstracts

While all abstracts summarize research, there are two common types:

1. Descriptive Abstract

- Very brief (often 50–100 words)
- Describes the topic, purpose, and scope
- Does not include results or conclusion
- Common in humanities and some social sciences

Example:

“This paper examines the role of social media in shaping youth political engagement. It discusses theoretical perspectives and explores recent developments in digital participation.”

2. Informative Abstract

- The most common in human sciences
- Longer (150–250 words)
- Includes: purpose, methods, results, and conclusion
- Gives a complete overview of the study

Example:

“Using a survey of 300 university students, this study investigates the effect of social media platforms on political engagement...”



5. Structure of an Academic Abstract

Most abstracts follow a clear structure of four to five parts:

a. Background / Introduction

One or two sentences that introduce the general topic and why it matters.

b. Problem Statement / Research Aim

What the study tries to explore, examine, or analyze.

c. Methodology

The approach used in the research.

Example: questionnaire, interview, qualitative analysis, experiment, case study.

d. Key Findings

Main results or observations of the study.

e. Conclusion / Implications

What the results mean and why they are important.

6. Characteristics of a Good Abstract

A strong academic abstract should be:

- **Clear**

The language must be simple, direct, and free from ambiguity.

- **Concise**

No long explanations or examples only essential information.

- **Objective**

It presents facts, not personal opinions.

- **Accurate**

It must reflect the content of the full research paper.



• Cohesive

Ideas must flow logically in a unified short paragraph.

7. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Writing the abstract before completing the paper
- Adding details not found in the full text
- Using quotations or long definitions
- Writing too much background information
- Including personal comments
- Using unclear or overly complex language

8. Model Abstract for Students

Title: **The Impact of Classroom Interaction on Students' Motivation in Higher Education**

“This study explores the role of interactive teaching strategies in improving student motivation in a university context. The research aims to understand how teacher–student communication, collaborative learning, and classroom engagement influence learners’ attitudes toward academic tasks. A mixed-method approach was used, combining a questionnaire with semi-structured interviews. The findings show that interactive activities significantly increase motivation, particularly when students feel supported and included in the learning process. The study concludes that adopting active learning strategies can enhance academic performance and contribute to a more positive educational environment.”

Conclusion

Writing an abstract is an essential academic skill for university students, especially in the human sciences. It requires the ability to summarize complex information clearly and logically. By understanding the purpose, structure, and characteristics of an effective abstract, students can produce professional academic work that communicates their research successfully.

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