Writing abstracts
Content

This will cover:

• the purpose of an abstract
• what an abstract should include
• good practice
• identifying what makes an impact

This information is not subject specific and aims to give general guidelines only.

There may be different elements according to what you are writing e.g. report, journal article, dissertation. You may have guidance from the module.
What is an abstract?

An abstract …
• gives a summary of the report/article/dissertation
• gives a succinct overview of the piece of work
• can stand-alone

• It tells you everything you need to know about the piece of work, without going into detail
Purpose

• It tells the reader if the piece of work is worth reading
• It acts like a shop window - whetting the appetite
• In the workplace, it might be the only part read by time-poor managers

You should be looking at abstracts to decide if you think an article is worth reading
What an abstract should include

1. The aim or research question – why the research was needed
2. How the research was carried out - methods
3. Headline findings - results
4. The most important conclusions – takeaway points

If you are doing a literature review/desk-based piece of research, you may not need to mention methodology
This study presents an overview and critical analysis of the literature related to Twitter and language learning published from 2009 to 2016. Seventeen studies were selected for inclusion based on a four-phase identification procedure, which helped to identify published studies that resulted in a content analysis of themes in the articles emerging from the data set. Guiding questions include the following: What types of research have been conducted on Twitter in educational settings? How was Twitter used for language learning? What educational benefits were found by using Twitter for language learning? and What challenges and future research does the current research offer for Twitter and language learning? The analysis points to the potential of microblogging as a way to promote interaction and communication, potentially with native speakers, to build community, and to encourage noticing and negotiation of meaning. Results reveal that Twitter is used diversely in language education settings; it can be used at different levels, settings, and with a variety of tasks. They also shed light on educational practices and how language learning students interact with native speakers, develop language skills and competencies, and build community in the language classroom.

Red = aim, blue = methodology, pink = findings/results, green = conclusion/take away point

There can be a crossover between the results and the take away point.
What not to do

• Don’t write in the future tense
  • you’re telling the reader what has happened, not what is going to happen

• Miss out key elements
  • e.g. results

• Waste words
  • Don’t go into too much detail

• Don’t use slang or informal language
• This dissertation will look at students’ attitudes towards an increase in tuition fees and whether an increase in fees would have put them off attending university. The hypothesis of this dissertation is that an increase in fees would have put some students off going to university. Fees were introduced in 1998 and were increased by the Higher Education Act in 2004 and in 2010 they were controversially raised again. In run-down areas, this might deter people. To get these opinions, a questionnaire will be sent to all students at New Town University and a sample of these will be asked to take part in a short interview to get more in-depth results. The results will then be analysed and discussed.
This dissertation will look at students’ attitudes towards an increase in tuition fees and whether an increase in fees would have put them off attending university. The hypothesis of this dissertation is that an increase in fees would have put some students off going to university. Fees were introduced in 1998 and were increased by the Higher Education Act in 2004 and in 2010 they were controversially raised again. In run-down areas, this might deter people. To get these opinions, a questionnaire will be sent to all students at New Town University and a sample of these will be asked to take part in a short interview to get more in-depth results. The results will then be analysed and discussed.

Orange = future tense. The abstract should summarise what you have done
Blue = non-academic language
Green = repetition (deter people/put them off)
Purple = unnecessary detail
Yellow = emotive language (controversially)

There are no results or analysis
Good practice

• Always check your guidelines
• Should be written last
• Write in the past tense
• Be concise
  • Usually 1 paragraph of around 200 words
• Include the important results
• May have headings e.g. Aims, Methodology, Results – these may be different paragraphs
• If you are asked to write an article for a specific journal, check the guidelines for that title
What not to include

- New information not present in the paper
- Figures and tables
- Undefined abbreviations
- Literature review or references
- Unnecessary details about the methods used

Always double-check with your guidelines
Making an impact

• The abstract is the first part that is read – people decide whether something is worth reading based on this
  • It is a showcase for your research
• It still needs editing, so make sure you write in full sentences, use correct spellings and grammar
• Make sure that it is clear
• Step back from it. If you were a reader, would it make you want to read the whole piece of work? Is there anything confusing or missing?
References

Related information

• Dissertations: getting started
• Report writing
• Writing a literature review
• Writing a research proposal

Available via the Learning Hub libguide
More help

• You can make one-to-one appointments with the Learning Advisors in the Learning Hub for writing
• [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/tutorials/literature](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/tutorials/literature)