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Writing an Abstract

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The purpose of this article is to help writers compose a clear and concise abstract to provide a brief overview of their paper for potentially interested readers.

A Quick Overview

For most graduate-level papers, you will need to supply an abstract as a critical piece of your paper. An abstract is simply a paragraph at the beginning of your project summarizing its contents, placed above your body of writing. As the first contact with a potential reader, the importance of an abstract cannot be understated; it allows the reader to quickly determine if that article will be useful to them in their own research. With time being one of the researcher's most valuable commodities, a well-written abstract may prove the difference in whether your work receives the attention it deserves.

Abstracting the Abstract

A good abstract should include several components to present a clear picture of your work. These consist of an introduction, methods, results, and discussion. The introduction will present the main topic and purpose of your research. Another way to think about this component is to pose the research question you hope to answer. Following the introduction, you will need to include a methods section in which you cover the process used to answer your research question in one to two sentences. The third component, the results, will present your major findings or arguments based on the research you conducted. The fourth and final component is the discussion. This step will involve a brief statement of how your research results answer the research question you originally posed. This will allow readers to catch a brief glimpse of what you discovered and might encourage them to search for a more in-depth exploration of these findings in the body of your paper. All four of these components are essential to a brief overview of your research and discoveries. Just below the abstract will be a keywords section complete with a list of terms that appear often in your paper or article.

A good abstract should not only include the necessary components but should also be written clearly and concisely. There is no need to be fancy or elaborate in an abstract. As you revise, it is helpful to cut out unnecessary words and rewrite multiple sentences into one clear and succinct sentence. This will allow your reader to peruse your overview without expending significant mental energy. In addition, you will be able to save further elaboration for the main article where it belongs.

Example

Your assignment is to write a paper on a significant current event, summarizing the facts and analyzing their significance in world history, especially as they are viewed in the context of various theories. Once you have finished writing your paper, you are required to include an abstract of the paper as part of your submission.

(Introduction) When Vladimir Putin made the consequential decision to invade the nation of Ukraine in February 2022, one was led to wonder what motivated him to carry out such a bold policy against his neighbor. **(Methods)** One theory stressed his hatred of democracy and fear of the West. Another theory referenced his desire to extend Russian influence and regain Soviet-era prestige. **(Results)** This paper takes the stance that by invading Ukraine, Vladimir Putin sought to assert Russian control and influence upon the nation. Such an argument is supported by Putin's radical nationalistic ideals, his desire to increase Russia's overall sphere of influence, and his longing to restore Russia to a historical period in which it was the most powerful member of the Soviet Union. **(Discussion)** The invasion of Ukraine is an important subject matter in the field of political analysis and international relations, as well as for the millions personally affected by Putin's decisions and policies. It is a topic that is relevant in the minds of a world population that is constantly observing each new development.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Putin, control, influence, motivations

Note how the Introduction tells readers about the possible motivations for Putin's invasion. The Methods section indicates that the author will be presenting a theoretical paper that provides explanations by combining and analyzing disparate facts. The Results presents the author's argument, while the Discussion reviews the implications of the invasion itself as well as the significance of the author's theory.

Tips

1. Do not write your abstract until you have finished your paper or article, so that you know what you are summarizing.
2. Remember to always write your abstract with the audience in mind, as it will likely be your first contact with potential readers. Ask yourself what basic elements they need to know before reading the entire article.
3. Avoid including information that is not covered in the paper.

Works Consulted

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