Reading and Writing Abstract
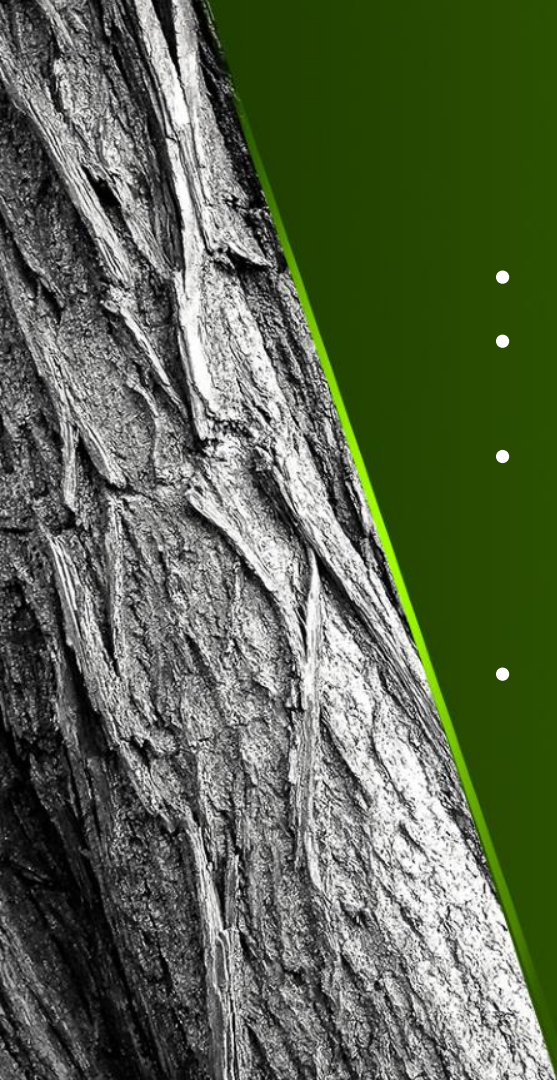
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What is abstract?

- An abstract is a 150- to 250-word paragraph that provides readers with a quick overview of your essay or report and its organization.

- It should express your thesis (or central idea) and your key points; it should also suggest any implications or applications of the research you discuss in the paper.

- An abstract is "a concise summary of the entire paper."
- The function of an abstract is to describe, not to evaluate or defend, the paper.
- The abstract should begin with a brief but precise statement of the problem or issue, followed by a description of the research method and design, the major findings, and the conclusions reached.
- The abstract should contain the most important key words referring to method and content: these facilitate access to the abstract by computer search and enable a reader to decide whether to read the entire dissertation.

Note

- Your abstract should read like an overview of your paper, not a proposal for what you intended to study or accomplish. Avoid beginning your sentences with phrases like, "This essay will examine…" or "In this research paper I will attempt to prove…"

The abstract

- The **abstract is** important as it **is** the first thing that your reader **will** see and **they are** likely **to** start forming an opinion of your research project based on your **abstract**.

- An **abstract is** written after **you have** finished writing up your research project as it summarises what your project contains.

Comparation

Bad Abstract

This paper will look at the buffalo genome project and its goals. I will prove that scientists have ethical and moral questions about genetic engineering because of this project.

Good Abstract

Begun in 1988, the buffalo genome project intends to map the 48 chromosomes that provide the blueprint for the buffalo species. The project has both scientific and ethical goals. The scientific goals underscore the advantages of the genome project, including identifying and curing diseases and enabling people to select the traits of their offspring, among other opportunities. Ethically, however, the project raises serious questions about the morality of genetic engineering. To handle both the medical opportunities and ethical dilemmas posed by the genome project, scientists need to develop a clear set of principles for genetic engineering and to continue educating the public about the genome project.

A **good abstract** is short but impactful,

so make sure every word counts.

Each sentence should clearly communicate one main point.

Avoid unnecessary filler words, and avoid obscure jargon—
the **abstract** should be understandable to readers who are not
familiar with your topic

Sample good abstract

Purpose

This paper analyzes how novices and experts can safely adapt and transfer their skills to new technology in the medical domain.

Methods

To answer this question, we compared the performance of 12 novices (medical students) with the performance of 12 laparoscopic surgeons (using a 2D view) and 4 robotic surgeons, using a new robotic system that allows 2D and 3D view.

Results

Our results showed a trivial effect of expertise (surgeons generally performed better than novices). Results also revealed that experts have adaptive transfer capacities and are able to transfer their skills independently of the human-machine system. However, the expert's performance may be disturbed by changes in their usual environment.

Implications

From a safety perspective, this study emphasizes the need to take into account the impact of these environmental changes along with the expert's adaptive capacities.

Try to avoid these common problems in abstracts:

- 1. The abstract provides a statement of what the paper will ask or explore rather than what it found:

    X This report examines the causes of oversleeping. (What did it find out about these causes?)

    √ Individuals oversleep because they go to bed too late, forget to set their alarms, and keep their rooms dark.

- 2. The abstract provides general categories rather than specific details in the findings:

    X The study draws conclusions about which variables are most important in choosing a movie theater. (What, specifically, are these variables?)

    √ The study concludes that the most important variables in choosing a movie theater are comfortable seats and high-quality popcorn.

Writing an Abstract

To **write** an informative and interesting **abstract**:

1) State the problem;

2) Present only your key findings (i.e., the main points), making explicit **how** they address the problem;

3) State the overall significance of the research;

4) Provide background as needed; and

5) Make your writing as clear and accessible as possible

Thank you very much