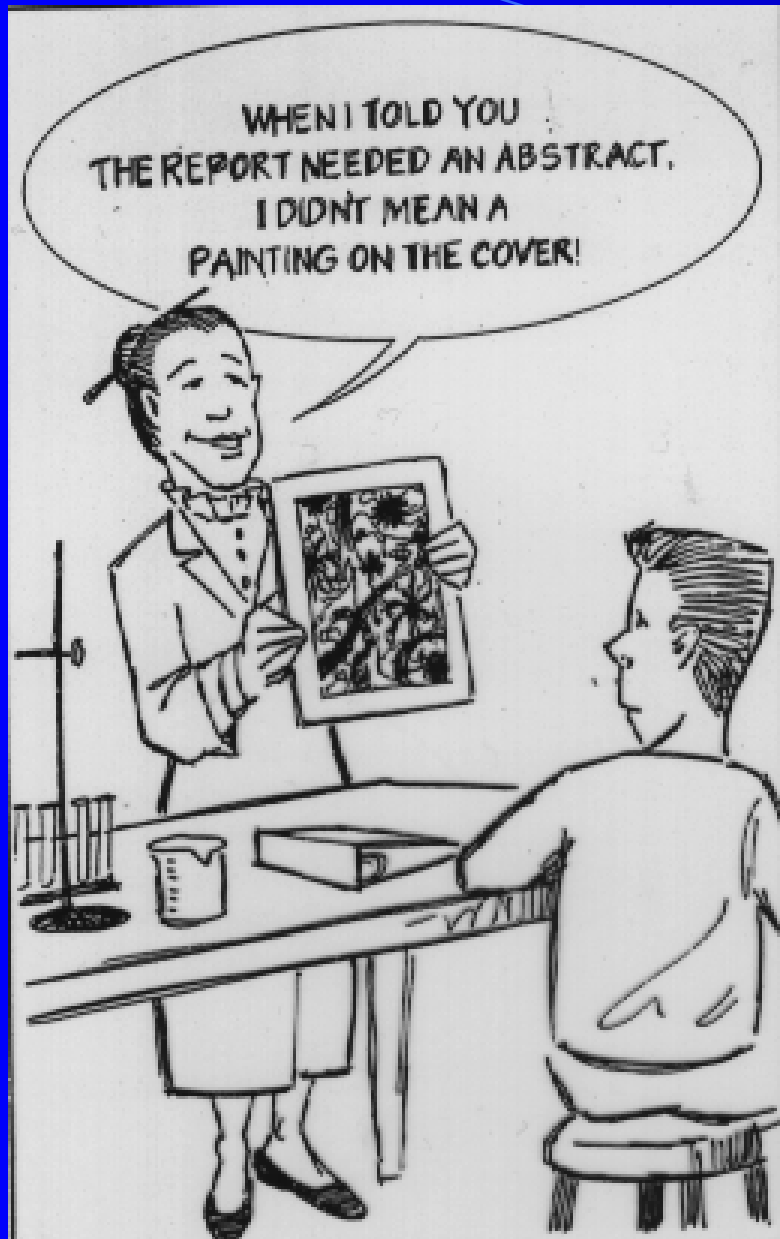


# *ABSTRACTS*

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# What is an abstract?



(Lobban C.&Scheffer M, 1992)

# Definition

**An abstract is a table of contents in a paragraph form.**

**It is a general map for the readers.**

**(M. Alley)**

# Function

- **Stands alone**
- **Understandable to larger audience**
- **Extended title**
- **“sells” your work**
- **Convinces the reader to read the rest**
- **Follows the chronology of the article**
- **Post-reading function (remember what was read)**

# Types

- **descriptive abstract**
- **informative abstract**
- **research abstract**
- **executive abstract (synopsis)**

# Descriptive abstract

- short (75-125 words)
- the focus is on the document
- resembles an introduction
- describes what the report is about
- point of view is external
- does not provide results, conclusions or recommendations
- simply lists the topics covered

# Descriptive abstract - sample

The purpose of this report is to develop recommendations for a new training manual for tutors in a post-secondary writing center. Initially the report gives a brief description of the writing center environment, pedagogy, and theory. The report compares information from these practitioner inquiries with the content and form of the sample manuals obtained from three other university writing centers and with the existing manual. The report concludes with recommendations for the Writing Center's Training Manual.

# **Informative abstract**

- **usually 200-300 words**
- **focus is on the subject**
- **gives the reader a general understanding of the article**
- **explains how the information in the article is useful**
- **resembles a summary**



# Informative abstract - sample

Research reported by Daly, Miller, and their colleagues suggests that writing apprehension is related to a number of factors we do not yet fully understand. This study suggests that included among those factors should be the belief that writing ability is a gift. Giftedness, as it is referred to in the study, is roughly equivalent to the Romantic notion of original genius. Results from a survey of 247 postsecondary students enrolled in introductory writing courses at two institutions indicate that higher levels of belief in giftedness are correlated with higher levels of writing apprehension, lower self-assessments of writing ability, lower levels of confidence in achieving proficiency in certain writing activities and genres, and lower self-assessments of prior experience with writing instructors. Significant differences in levels of belief in giftedness were also found among students who differed in their perceptions of the most important purpose for writing, with students who identified "to express your own feelings about something" as the most important purpose for writing having the highest mean level of belief in giftedness. Although the validity of the notion that writing ability is a special gift is not directly addressed, the results suggest that belief in giftedness may have deleterious effects on student writers.

# **Executive abstract (synopsis)**

- **found at the beginning of a report**
- **function similar to informative abstract**
- **wider scope (includes introduction and conclusion of the report)**
- **tells the value of the report for a particular topic**
- **length: 1 page or more**

# **Research article abstract**

- **mini version of an article**
- **follows the article structure**
- **length: 150-200 words**

# Research article

**I**

**introduction (why)**

**M**

**methodology (how)**

**R**

**results (what)**

**A**

**analysis (what)**

**D**

**discussion (what it means)**

# Research abstract: focus on questions

- **background (topic)**
- **purpose (why)**
- **methodology (how)**
- **results (what)**
- **discussion (what it means)**

# Research abstract: Elements to include

- **Statement of the problem**  
or purpose of research (1 sentence approx.)
- **Experiment/methodology** and/or  
theoretical principles applied
- Summarise **results**/data/findings
- State **conclusions**/applications (1 sentence approx.)

# Statement of the problem

- give the reason(s) for the project: long range goals and significance
- give the objective(s) of the work to be presented

# Methods

- **briefly cite the methods used (e.g. How large was the sample, what equipment was used, etc)**



# Results

- ☪ say something of value (e.g. there was
- ☪ a significant difference..)
- ☪ include numbers (statistics) when available
- ☪ can include negative results (e.g. too little protein was produced..)

# Conclusions or summary

- What do your results suggest or mean?
- What do your results contribute to the field?
- What can you do now/where is the project going?

# Research abstract - sample

Previous research has suggested a strong correlation between migraine attacks and the acquisition of functional visual cortical hyperexcitability in migraine sufferers, particularly those with an aural phase. In order to test this hypothesis, our research group developed both a clinical experiment (a questionnaire-based survey) and a neurophysical study (computerized visual trigram recognition). In the questionnaire study, subjects submitted responses to simple queries on headache and eyestrain/ light sensitivity. Control subjects (non-migraineurs) exhibited significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) lower incidence of light sensitivity than medically diagnosed populations of both migraineurs with and without aura. In the neurophysical study, observers viewed random sets of low contrast letter trigrams at three different contrast levels in an attempt to both determine a 5-10% threshold level for correct responses within a control group as well as to examine the response of migraineurs in the completion of the same task. Migraineurs were shown to have significantly higher error rates on this task, contradicting prior studies. Further experiments are being conducted to confirm the results of this initial study. In addition, an orientation bandwidth study using varied-intensity sinewave gratings is in progress to gather convergent psychophysical evidence on cortical hyperexcitability phenomena.

# Do not include

- **bibliographical references**
- **lengthy equations or structures**
- **abbreviations, acronyms (unless explained)**
- **trade names, symbols**

# Length

- **meet the word count limitation**
- **common word limit: 150 - 200 words**

# Steps for writing an abstract

- ⌚ Read the article or paper
- ⌚ Look for main parts
- ⌚ Think of key words first (these should appear in the abstract)
- ⌚ Use headings as guides
- ⌚ Write a draft
- ⌚ Use condensed style (noun-adjectives)
- ⌚ Concise, clear, straightforward sentences
- ⌚ Nomenclature used with field/society conventions
- ⌚ Do not copy sentences – rather summarise
- ⌚ Revise the draft (correct weaknesses)
- ⌚ Include transitions from one part to another
- ⌚ Fix errors in spelling and grammar

# Tenses

## present tense/past tense

The study combines a critical...

The investigation provides ....

In this study ... was studied.

I

## past tense

M

The investigation included..

The samples were cooled...

## past tense

A change in colour was observed.

There was an increase in...

R

## past tense

A

Direct examination showed ..

Results indicated that children...

## present tense

These findings indicate ..

The results suggest....

We recommend that....

D

# Which type of abstract is this?

Over to you now

