

Helpful tips for writing an Abstract

The abstract is often the main thing that people look at when deciding whether to accept your project for a conference or that people read to see if they want to see a presentation or read an article. An abstract “encapsulates the most important information contained in an project, such as the purpose of the study, methods used, key findings from the study, and/or contribution the study makes” (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 67).

An abstract should have four parts to it:

- An orientation to the nature of the study and what the researcher is investigating.
- A description of the method, procedures, sample, and other specific information about how the study was done. (If it is a review of literature, say that was the method)
- An explanation of the results of the study.
- A discussion of the results and the relationship of the results to previous research findings. What are the implications of the results? (Rubin, Rubin & Piele, 2005, p. 243)

Other things that you should consider:

- Usually when referring to your work and what you did with your project, refer to it in past tense since you already did the project. You can say that the study examines
- Be sure to answer the “so what” question and explain the relevance or significance of your work. What recommendations or conclusions can be made based on your work?
- If you completed a literature review on a topic, explain that was your method and then add your conclusions or recommendations based on that review. Where should we go from here? What should we do or think?

Sample Abstracts

- This study examines the role of self perception and communication, and brings a new communication phenomenon to light called communication bravado. Communication bravado is when people believe they are effective communicators, despite feedback to the contrary from supervisors and coworkers. This study was based on a case study with grocery store employees and hospital employees, who were selected to attend communication training sessions. The existence of communication bravado can have important ramifications for trainers because people with communication bravado do not think they need to learn what you are teaching them. (Quintanilla & Mallard, 2008, p. 4)
- This study examines students’ reports of their satisfaction and their institution’s contribution to their learning based on responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from 1,536 first-year and senior students at a large, research-extensive university in the spring of 2004. The results suggest that high expectations and prompt feedback on academic performance are most strongly related to student satisfaction. The consideration of multiple best practices simultaneously many improve our understanding of the most critical combination of practices and the unique contributions of each to learning, student satisfaction, and the likelihood of persistence. The implications for research and practice are discussed. (Ryan, 2008, p. 12)
- This study examined the college audition process for prospective music students as experienced by individuals who matriculated at a large public university or a small private university. One hundred thirty-seven students at the two universities completed surveys and thirty-two students completed personal interviews. The positive and negative aspects of the audition process were revealed as well as other important factors in making a college choice, including communication with the music department, scholarships, and the influence of the student’s high school music teacher on his or her decision. (Butke, & Frego, 2009, p. 66)