



Academic writing - abstract

A. Work in pairs/groups. Ask and answer each other the following questions.

1. Do you have any experience in writing academic abstracts? If so, what experience?
2. What is paraphrasing? When do you use it?
3. What do you expect to learn in this seminar?

Abstract: Definition

Complete the unfinished words in the definition of an abstract.

Abstract is a concise su_____ of what the re_____ or ar_____ is about. The abstract can be read to get a quick over_____. It tells the re_____ what to expect in your work.

What makes a good abstract? Choose the answer that you believe is correct.

A good abstract:

- 1a) can stand alone as a unit of information
- 1b) must always be read with the original paper to be understandable to the reader
- 2a) always has a title
- 2b) can be written without the title
- 3a) is never written in the form of one paragraph
- 3b) uses one well-developed paragraph
- 4a) contains additional information not included in the paper
- 4b) contains no information not included in the paper
- 5a) always uses passive structures, never contains sentences using "I" as an agent
- 5b) often uses passive structures, the usage of "I" is not forbidden
- 6a) usually does not include any referencing
- 6b) referencing must always be included
- 7a) should be written before the paper
- 7b) should be written after the paper



Types of abstracts

There are basically two types of academic abstracts, descriptive and informative. Put the following features (in the middle) in the right column according to the type of the abstract.

Descriptive

*for humanities
include method used
usually very short
for social sciences papers
usually longer
for sciences and engineering*

Informative

Abstract and summary

Is “summary” another word for “abstract”? Or possibly just for one type of abstract described above? If not, what are the differences? Write down the possible differences, compare your notes with a partner. Then watch the following video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzTSPQyg2Rc>

Abstract structure

- background
- purpose
- particular interest/focus of paper
- overview of contents (not always included)
- conclusion

Exercises on abstract writing

1. Look at the Abstract structure again and order the sentences to form an abstract.
2. Decide which keywords you would use for this abstract.
3. Decide the type of the abstract.
4. Give the abstract a title.

- The participants were 30 volunteer students, 15 male and 15 female who have recently graduated from the Biology Department of Red Tree University.
- The participants were asked what influence biology education has on their attitudes regarding world peace and humanity.
- The results indicated that biology education has some positive impacts on attitudes of the students regarding humanity and world peace.
- The responses of the participants indicated that, at the end of four year biology education, they have more self- awareness and have greater capacity to love human beings and all the living creatures.



- The aim of this study was to examine whether biology education has any impacts on attitudes in terms of humanity and world peace.
 - In addition, they reported they had the feeling that they could contribute to the world peace.
 - Biology has always been a beneficial discipline for the human beings.
- (Word Count: 143)

Keywords:

Type of the abstract:

Abstract title:

Read the following abstract carefully. It is taken from the field of computer assisted learning. Identify the sentences in the abstract that correspond to the elements in the preceding box.

Use Of A Writing Web-Site By Pre-Masters Students On An English for Academic Purposes Course.

A. J. Gillett, University of Hertfordshire

Abstract

¹During the last 10 years, use of the World-Wide-Web for educational purposes has increased dramatically. ²However, very little empirical research has been carried out to determine the effectiveness of this use. ³The aim of this study was therefore to investigate the effectiveness of using the World-Wide-Web on an EAP writing course. ⁴Two groups of students were taught writing by two different methods: one group was taught by a teacher in a traditional classroom, while a second group included use of an on-line web-site in their course. ⁵The two groups were assessed in the same way after a twelve-week period of instruction. ⁶Results of the assessment showed significant differences between the two groups, the group that used the on-line web-site performing much better on all aspects of the test. ⁷This suggests that the use of computer assisted learning programmes for at least some of the teaching time available can be recommended for EAP writing courses.

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

Sentence 3

Sentence 4

Sentence 5

Sentence 6

Sentence 7



A good abstract sample

Identify the structural parts of this abstract. What kind of abstract is it?

"Their War": The Perspective of the South Vietnamese Military in Their Own Words

Author: Julie Pham (UCB participant in UC Day 2001)

Despite the vast research by Americans on the Vietnam War, little is known about the perspective of South Vietnamese military, officially called the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). The overall image that emerges from the literature is negative: lazy, corrupt, unpatriotic, apathetic soldiers with poor fighting spirits. This study recovers some of the South Vietnamese military perspective for an American audience through qualitative interviews with 40 RVNAF veterans now living in San José, Sacramento, and Seattle, home to three of the top five largest Vietnamese American communities in the nation. An analysis of these interviews yields the veterans' own explanations that complicate and sometimes even challenge three widely held assumptions about the South Vietnamese military: 1) the RVNAF was rife with corruption at the top ranks, hurting the morale of the lower ranks; 2) racial relations between the South Vietnamese military and the Americans were tense and hostile; and 3) the RVNAF was apathetic in defending South Vietnam from communism. The stories add nuance to our understanding of who the South Vietnamese were in the Vietnam War. This study is part of a growing body of research on non-American perspectives of the war. In using a largely untapped source of Vietnamese history & oral histories with Vietnamese immigrants & this project will contribute to future research on similar topics.

Word count: 221 words

Your own abstract

- written abstract of your presentation
- to be handed in printed on the day of your presentation
- between 150 and 250 words
- max. 8 points of the overall mark (meeting the genre/text organization/grammar/vocabulary – 2 points per each)

Read the following abstracts and assess them following the criteria given above



Abstract 1

GAO KAO

One of the issues that is discussed in China as well as in other countries is Gao Kao exam. This school leaving examination and university entrance exam at once is a big milestone in the lives of students in China. Due to its difficulty and severe requirements this exam has been labelled as the 'most difficult exam in the world'. The aim of this paper is to present Gao Kao in general and convey some information about the process of this exam. Aside from this, it also mentions some of the most interesting stories that happened within Gao Kao. In order to provide basic and most important information about this matter, this paper presents fundamental facts, which concerns this issue and it also points out some curiosities to emphasize the seriousness of this exam. This paper serves as a good medium to form an image of what Gao Kao looks like and which role it has in the lives of Chinese students. Provided information are meant to enable to gain knowledge about this phenomenon.

Abstract 2

Political campaigns- from posters to votes

Political campaigns are something, every one of us have already experienced. Television advertisements, flyers, streets full of posters and billboards are the reality we are facing before every election. Yet, people often forget that political campaign is a carefully planned activity with a very particular goal.

The goal of political campaign is to convince voters, to vote for a specific candidate. The process of political campaign is similar to advertising. Candidate is the product and voters are consumers. In order for campaign to be successful, candidates have to take into account a lot of different things.

First, political campaign must be well organized. It must have straight goals and a clear strategy. Second, the candidate must have resources; funding and time, as well as also campaign staff. The next thing campaigners have to know really well is the target group of the campaign. Last, but not least, for a campaign to be really successful, it is important to create a trademark. Every detail matters when creating a trademark. Campaigners are well aware of the importance of designs, photos, slogans and even colors when making a trademark.



To conclude the topic fully, it is reasonable to ask ourselves what is the point of political campaigning? Does it really work? The answer is yes. Political campaign is very successful especially when directed towards people, who have not yet decided

Tip 1: Read this article before you sit down to write your own abstract

How to write an abstract in 30 minutes:

<http://phdtalk.blogspot.cz/2011/08/how-to-write-abstract-in-30-minutes.html>

Tip 2: Watch this video to consolidate/review your knowledge

How to write an academic abstract: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJO9spgyMr0>