Research & Abstract Writing Workshop

UMES Writing Workshop
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April 17, 2020
Agenda

• Abstract
  • Description
  • Writing Strategies

• Citing Sources
  • Key Points
  • APA

• Research Writing (Review)
Writing an Abstract
“An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper”

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 73
Why is an Abstract Important?

• Introduction to research/paper
• Summary of the body of work
• Editors may make decision on sending to reviewers based on abstract
• Reviewers first “judgement” of manuscript
• May be all someone “reads” of the paper
Components of an Abstract

1) General topic of study, specific topic of research, context and/or background information
   • 1 to 3 sentences

2) Central questions or statement of problem addressed in study
   • 1 sentence

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Components of an Abstract

3) **What is known**, what previous research provides
   • 1 to 2 sentences

4) **Main reasons, rationale, and/or goals** of research
   • Why is this important to address? (e.g. new topic, filling a gap, applying new methods, dispute in the literature)
   • 1 to 2 sentences

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Components of an Abstract

5) **Methods and research design** – Cover the research or analytical methods
   • 1 to 2 sentences

6) **Findings, results, or arguments**
   • 1 to 3 sentences

7) **Significance and implications** of findings/study

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Practice

Find an abstract from a published empirical research article.
Practice

• Identify:
  o General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
  o Central questions/problem statement
  o What is known/previous research
  o Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
  o Methods & research design
  o Findings, results, arguments
  o Significance and implications
Qualities of a Good Abstract

1. Accurate
2. Nonevaluative
3. Coherent and Readable
4. Concise

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract - ACCURATE

• Reflects the purpose and contents of the paper

• If extends or replicates prior research, cite the work (author-date citation)

• Bottom Line:
  o Avoid overstating what the research/paper is about

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract - NONEVALUATIVE

• Report the work

• Avoid evaluating the contents
  o e.g. “In this ground-breaking research…”

• **Bottom Line:**
  o This is not the place for your feelings and sentiments on the paper

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

• Clear language that is not overly specific to the field

• Use verbs, rather than noun equivalents
  o e.g. “investigated” rather than “an investigation of”

• Active voice, rather than passive
  o e.g. “we present results” rather than “results are presented”

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

• Present tense for conclusions drawn or results
  o e.g. “Authentic leadership impacts employee trust in XYZ”

• Past tense to describe how variables were manipulated or outcomes measured
  o E.g. “In this study, employee trust was A, B, and C.”

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

**Bottom Line**

Use simple language and have someone outside your field of expertise read it before submission!!

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(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – CONCISE

• Be brief

• Each sentence should provide maximum information

• Set-it up for success
  ◦ Lead with a powerful sentence
  ◦ Key points first

• Include 4 or 5 of the MOST IMPORTANT results or findings

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – CONCISE

Bottom Line

Everything cannot be in the abstract, hit the highlights

Think about key words that will pull the article in searches

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(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Practice

Evaluate the abstract.

Is it (1) accurate, (2) nonevaluative, (3) coherent and readable, (4) concise?
When to Write an Abstract

• After the paper is complete

• Remember this is a summary of the complete paper

• Exceptions
  o Abstract for paper proposal
  o Extended abstract (usually paper proposal or conference)
Abstract Writing Sources

• APA Manual (7th Edition) – Section 3.3
  o Walks through components
  o Details for empirical, replication, meta-analyses, literature review, theoretical, and methodological articles

• Journal abstracts
  o Look at journal guidelines

• UMES Guide to Preparation of Theses and Dissertations

• University of Wisconsin Writing Center
Final Abstract Thoughts

• Reader should understand “gist” of paper from abstract
• Usually you do not cite references
• Focus on what YOU studied and/or found
• **REMEMBER** – Often abstract is all people read of the paper

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Your abstract is too long and complicated! You need to completely re-write it!

You call this garbage science? There's not enough detail!

What is this claptrap? The words make no sense - and there's too many of them!

Are you kidding me with this? How will your peers respect you when you write like a child?

It's too technical! You won't have a research career if you only write for your niche!

Abstract:

If only it were that simple.

©2014 - The Upturned Microscope
Citing Sources
"Cite the work of individuals whose ideas, theories, or research have directly influenced your work."

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 253
Citing Sources

• Only cite work that:
  o You read and ideas that are incorporated!!

• Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
  o This builds a better foundation for your research

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources

• Cite **PRIMARY** sources
  o Try to avoid citing sources that are cited in another article
  o Go to the source
  o Ensures accuracy of information

• Credit ideas to sources in building **YOUR** theories and arguments

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources

• Use a combination of paraphrasing and direct quotations

• Paraphrase
  o Either use a parenthetical or narrative citation
    • Parenthetical – End of paraphrased sentence
      o “Cats in space turn blue (Smith, 2020).”
    • Narrative – In-text in beginning of sentence
      o “Smith (2020) indicated that cats in space turn blue.”

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources – Direct Quotations

• Short Quotations (less than 40 words)
  o Appears within the paragraph
  o Enclosed in quotation marks

• Two formatting options:
  o Author name, data, and page number of reference follows the quotation
    • “Quotation” (Smith, 2020, p. 106).
  o Author and date precedes the quotation, followed by quotation, then page number of the reference
    • Smith (2020) stated, “quotation” (p. 106).
Citing Sources – Direct Quotations

• Long Quotations (40 words or more)
  o Display as a freestanding block of text
  o Omit quotation marks
  o Start on a new line
  o Indent block half an inch from left margin
  • Same position as new paragraph

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources – Direct Quotations

• Long Quotations (40 words or more)
  ○ Quotation block is double spaced
  ○ Cite the author(s), year, and page number at end of quotation *after the final punctuation mark*

• Unless author and year cited before the quotation, then just page number

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
According to Edmondson and McManus (2007),

To advance management theory, a growing number of scholars are engaging in field research, studying real people, real problems, and real organizations. Although the potential relevance of field research is motivating, the research journey can be messy and inefficient, fraught with logistical hurdles and unexpected events. (p. 1155)

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources

• Avoid undercitation
  o This can lead to plagiarism or self-plagiarism

• Avoid overcitation
  o Distracting and unnecessary
  o You DO NOT need to repeat the same citation every sentence
    • As long as source/topic has not changed

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources – Avoiding Overcitation

*Within the same paragraph*, when the name of the author is part of the narrative, you *do not* need to include the year in subsequent NONPARENTHETICAL references.

- As long as the study cannot be confused with other studies
- **NOTE:**
  - Any initial citation in subsequent paragraphs needs the author and year
  - Parenthetical citations need to have both name and year within the same paragraph.

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources – The Bottom Line

• This is how you support your assertions
• Avoids plagiarism
• Lends credibility to your work
• Review APA (7th edition) – Chapter 8

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Research:
Tips & Tricks
The Academic's Narrative Arc

Exposition

Data

The seriously riveting data

Findings/Conclusions

Caveat

"It's difficult to generalise..."

"Further research is needed..."

Cheryl Brumley’s ‘Stepping out of the academic box’, Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, 2014

(Brumley, 2014)
“Every story, even the driest, has a human face. Draw it well and put it on display, for to readers it is a mirror and a magnet”

(Flaherty, 2009, p. xv)
Understand the Integration of Theory

Theories explain, predict, and help to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008).
Understand the Integration of Theory

• Theoretical Framework - Structure that can hold and support the research study

• Introduces and describes the theory
  o Explains why research problem exists within the confines of the theory

(Abend, 2008)
Selecting Appropriate Theory

• Use knowledge about theory to inform study

• Theory selection depends on:
  o Appropriateness
  o Ease of application
  o Explanatory power

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Why is Theory Integration Important

• *Strengthens the study by:*
  - Connects the study to existing knowledge
  - Provides the basis for hypotheses and research methods
  - Allows to move from describing the phenomenon to generalizing about aspects of the phenomenon

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Why is Theory Integration Important

• **Strengthens the study by:**
  - Identifies limits to those generalizations
  - Identifies what key variables influence a phenomenon of interest
  - Allows for a focus on how key variables differ and in what conditions
  - Helps reader to evaluate the study critically

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Final Thoughts
Abstract

• Look at examples
• Read APA manual guidelines
• Be accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and readable, and concise
Abstract Should Contain (7 parts)

1. General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
2. Central questions/problem statement
3. What is known/previous research
4. Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
5. Methods & research design
6. Findings, results, arguments
7. Significance and implications
Citing Sources

- Cite work that contributed ideas, theories, or research to your manuscript
- Only cite work that is part of the manuscript
- Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
- Be careful of undercitation and overcitation

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Research Writing

• Remember that you are telling a story

• Utilize theory to support your study
  o Theory explains, predicts, and helps to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008)
References


