

## Writing an Effective Abstract

The abstract gives you an opportunity to pull readers in—it helps them recognize the importance and relevance of your work. Abstracts should be between 150 and 200 words and include four key aspects.

**The Objective of Your Paper:** State the core issue, research question, or objective of the research. For example:

Why do some social groups report income less often than others? I propose social sanctions inhibit people from disclosing their income to others.

**The Method of Research:** Briefly describe the methods, including the population, sampling method, sample size, study design (e.g., survey), and the date of the data collection. For example:

In this article I examine the reporting practices of exact or approximate income in a national U.S. probability sample of 2,031 respondents interviewed by telephone in 1990.

**Describe the results.** For example:

Mistrust reduces the probability of reporting income, whether exactly or approximately. Across all racial and income categories, respondents reported resisting disclosing their income both on surveys and to acquaintances for fear of social judgment or possible victimization.

**Mention the conclusions.** Interpret the results as supporting or not supporting the theory, hypotheses, or literature. Draw conclusions and state implications. For example:

The results confirm existing literature that social sanctions affect the reporting of income in surveys. However the results also extend existing literature by demonstrating that a fear of physical and economic victimization also leads people to withhold information regarding their incomes.

### A sample writing strategy:

1. First, try to make the abstract a substitute for reading the article. Name the population you have studied, mention your methodology, mention the theoretical framework that you are using, summarize your conclusions.
2. Think broadly and imagine every research area that your study would ideally influence and generate a list of relevant terms that these other researchers might use in a search. Revise your abstract, trying to insert these thoughts and words.
3. After you have a draft that is a good reduction and will draw in researchers that are outside of your primary field, look over your abstract for any repeated words. Look for synonyms, including some field specific terms or jargon, if appropriate. Use broader and narrower terms. Each word is taking up prime real estate. Make it work for you.

**General Notes:** Be orderly, succinct, and concrete. Use active verbs such as "report", "propose," and "analyze" rather than static verbs such as "is", "are" and "appears to be." Do not hedge or equivocate. Vary your sentence structure; don't make every sentence, noun-verb-noun.