

How to write an Abstract for a Journal Paper

The Abstract of a paper is a short document that is intended to capture the interest of a potential reader. Thus in a sense it is a marketing document for your full paper. If the Abstract is poorly written or if it is boring then it will not encourage a potential reader to spend the time reading the work.

Thus the first rule of Abstract writing is that it should engage the reader by telling him or her what the paper is about and why they should read it. Although strictly not part of an Abstract, the title of the proposed paper is also important. Short attention-catching titles are the most effective. However, it is also important, for a journal paper, to ensure that the title describes the subject being written about. The length of the title should generally be limited to no more than 12 words.

With regards to the body of the Abstract it is important to make a clear statement of the topic of the paper and the research question. State how the research was/is being undertaken. For example, is it empirical or theoretical? Is it quantitative or qualitative? Perhaps it follows the critical research method. What value are the findings and to whom will they be of use?

The Abstract should include answers to the following questions:

- what is the purpose of the research, and what research gaps are being resolved by it?
- what methods are used to achieve the objectives of the research?
- what are the most important results of the research?
- how is this research supporting e-learning practice, and how is it advancing the compass of e-learning knowledge?

The Abstract should then briefly describe the work to be discussed in the paper and also give a concise summary of the findings. Finally the Abstract should not include diagrams and in general references are not required in the Abstract.

The marketing of your proposed paper needs to be done within the word limit of 300 - 500 words.

Keywords and Key Phrases

Although not part of the Abstract as such the journal requests authors to provide key words. Key words or phrases are used by Internet search engines to locate the paper. Somewhere between 5 and 10 key words or short key phrases are required and they should be the words which most closely reflect the content of the paper.