

# THE MORPHOLOGY OF AN ABSTRACT

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BASIS

## ABSTRACT

*Abstracts can be categorized into structured or unstructured and typically serve as summaries of longer articles or conference presentations. Structured abstracts are most often used by journals reporting experimental or quantitative studies, whereas quality research can oftentimes be briefed through unstructured abstracts. Abstracts serve as a vital means of communication in research as they convey the crux of a research paper in a short time frame.*

*Keywords: Abstract writing, Background, Methodology, Results, Conclusion, MeSH*

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## INTRODUCTION

A scientific paper's complete abstract is a shortened version of the study. It outlines a study and its findings. It is a way of explaining to one's peers what was done, why it was done, what was discovered, and what the ramifications are. An abstract is severely limited in terms of the number of words it can contain and the amount of space it can occupy on a page, therefore it can only be a "bare bones" overview of all the information in the study.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of journals want abstracts to be between 150 and 300 words. Seasoned authors and editors advise using sentences that are 15 to 20 words in length.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, only two to four phrases are needed for each of the five sections of an abstract.<sup>2</sup>

## TYPES OF ABSTRACTS

1. Structured abstract: It contains subsections and subheadings like "background," "aim," "method(s)," "results," and "conclusions" and provides more information than traditional ones.<sup>3</sup>



2. Unstructured abstract: A straightforward task description that summarises the work.

## SECTIONS OF AN ABSTRACT

The usual sections defined in a structured abstract are the Background, Methods, Results, and Conclusions.

### 1. Background

This section is usually the shortest part of the abstract. However, what it encapsulates in the initial lines must directly address the research question at hand. The key components to be added in this section are listed in Table 1.

The backdrop's goal is to give the reader a background on the study and thereby pave the way for an explanation of the investigation's techniques.

### 2. Methodology

Mentioning the type of study conducted, such as qualitative or quantitative research (which will also address the research technique) is crucial. An abstract should include details about the sample size, data collection strategy, sampling procedures, and study duration if it is quantitative research. Concurrently, in qualitative research, the abstract should include observational data, views, and surveys (particularly non-numerical data). Table 1 lists down all the necessary components that need to be added in this section as applicable.

### 3. Results

Nothing should diminish the scope and caliber of the results section, which is the most significant component of the abstract. This is because readers who read an abstract do so to become familiar with the study's findings. As a result, it is often observed that this section utilizes most space in the abstract to provide information on the outcomes within the word limit.<sup>4</sup> Reporting of negative findings is as important as that of positive findings. Statistical tests and their p-values can be mentioned with discretion wherever applicable.

### 4. Conclusion



A conclusion should not repeat what has already been conveyed in the results section. It should rather sum up the outcome as an answer to the problem statement. The reader should be able to apprehend how the research gap was filled or attempted to fill.

ABSTRACT			
Background	Methods	Results	Conclusion
Known elements related to the research work Research Gap Problem Statement	Structure of the study Clinical condition of recruited participants Study environment Sample size Data collection procedure Interventions Study duration Assessment tools	Outcomes explained in short based on priorities/objectives of the study	Take-home message Future implications for research Notable additional observations

Table 1 Key components of a structured abstract

### 5. Keywords

Medical publications frequently request organized abstracts. Typically, keywords are listed at the end of the abstract section, and MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) are particularly useful when used as keywords. These keywords are read by an algorithm that categorizes an article under the suitable MeSH term. When a literature search involving the keyword is made, the algorithm ensures that your paper is displayed as one of the results of the literature search.<sup>5</sup> The MeSH equivalent in Embase is called Emtree.

## CONCLUSION

Structuring an abstract is one of the facets of drafting an abstract; writing and scientific accuracy are others. It is thus necessary to cognize all the details that go into each section of an abstract, which also acts as the primary impression of the research work to the keen reader.

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