

What is an abstract?

An abstract is a concise summary of a completed research project, paper, or essay. A well-written abstract will make the reader want to learn more about your research and attend your presentation. Abstracts also serve as a summary of the research so the paper can be categorised and searched by subject and keywords.

How long is an abstract?

Generally, abstracts are limited to 200 to 300 words, but the exact word limit will be stated by the publication, conference, or organisation requesting the abstract.

There is no single format for writing a successful abstract!

Your paper might be:

1. An exploration – something you are currently working on (“In this paper, I will explore X...”).
2. An argument, relating to something you have already written. It may be an excerpt from an essay or dissertation.
3. A piece of creative writing, produced either for the showcase or that you have already written. You may wish to read out the entire piece, or a selected section (depending on its length).

Tips for writing an abstract

1. Start strong. Your first sentence should be clear and attention-grabbing.
2. Find the main point of your paper or research and phrase it in a way that can be understood by an educated non-expert.
3. Remember to use keywords important to your field of research or to use words that indicate your field (literary linguistics, creative writing, English literature).
4. Remember, it’s a summary – so use short quotations (if you feel they are necessary) and avoid footnotes if possible.
5. Make sure you proof-read your work, to avoid spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Further information can be found here:

www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/documents/abstractsandappendices.pdf