

Abstracts

Your dissertation should include an **abstract**, summarising the contents of the dissertation; this should include, for example, the issues you discuss or the data analysed, the main structure of your argument or the hypothesis tested, and the conclusions reached. It can be summarised as follows

- The research question
- A brief explanation of why the question is interesting
- An outline of the materials and methods (perhaps the key theories or experiments used)
- A summary of the findings
- The most interesting of the implications

Writing abstracts

Writing an abstract involves boiling down the essence of a whole document into a short piece of writing that conveys the core information. One way of writing an effective abstract is to read your complete dissertation / project and do the following:

1. Highlight the main objective and the conclusions (check your introduction, discussion and perhaps conclusion)
2. Bracket information in the methods section that contains keyword information
3. Highlight the results from the discussion or results section.
4. Compile the above highlighted and bracketed information into a single paragraph
5. Condense the bracketed information into key words and phrases that identify your methods (you do not need to explain them in an abstract)
6. Delete extra words and phrases.
7. Delete any background information.
8. Rephrase the first sentence so that it begins by identifying what is new or particular about your dissertation rather than the general topic. One way of doing this is to begin the first sentence with the phrase "this dissertation" or "this study."
9. Revise the abstract so that it conveys the essential information.

Appendices

When to use them

- Material that is related but supplementary to the main argument
- Brief material referred to throughout your dissertation, such as a piece of legislation or historical document
- Complex tables or data

Avoid using appendices just to avoid making hard editing decisions about material you cannot include in the final text – exceeding the word limit will usually be penalised and tutors will often not read beyond this.

Examples of appendix materials

- transcription(s) of interviews(s)
- examples and/or full results of questionnaires
- materials not published in standard sources such as correspondence between you and an author whose writing you are researching
- large tables of data

Issues to note in using appendices

Your main text should flow to present a continuously advancing argument, informed by the results of applying particular analytical research methods (for example, textual or statistical). Whilst you should justify in the text which research method you have used and why, the full results of your application of it (for example a statistical printout) could be placed in an appendix. Appendices are not usually included in the word count, but do check this, especially for PhD submissions.

- If you are in any doubt check with your department and/or supervisor. You must state in the main text or a footnote that particular material is in a specific appendix.
- Adopt a system of either numbering or lettering appendices and keep to the system. For example, the first appendix referred to in the main text could be 'A' or '1', the second 'B' or '2', etc. Similarly, if you give one appendix a title, name any others. A list of appendices should appear after the Contents page.