

An abstract is a concise summary that informs the reader of a work's contents. Abstracts come before a full article, book, paper, or report and contain an overview of the work, which helps students and scholars determine whether to read the full text. While student assignments do not typically include abstracts as components of larger projects, you may occasionally be required to write one for instructors, institutions, or student publications. This handout serves as a general guide for writing an abstract, but it should not replace assignment guidelines or style guide requirements.

## Format

In academic writing, abstracts are generally located between the cover page and the main work. The format for an abstract varies depending on instructor or style guidelines (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA). For example, Chicago suggests that abstracts be limited to a few hundred words, and APA recommends no more than 250 words. In general, the word *abstract* is included in title case and is bolded and centered at the top of the page. The abstract should consist of a single paragraph and, generally, is not indented.

## Content

An abstract is not an excerpted section of your writing but an accessible summary of the work. Think of your abstract as a blueprint for the paper since it informs readers of what the work will include. An abstract should familiarize the reader with the work's general idea, thesis, key points, and main sections (e.g., context, methods, results, guiding theories or frameworks, etc.).

While it may be tempting to write your abstract first, it is often easier to complete after drafting or revising your work and when you understand your writing and work in its entirety. Additionally, the content of an abstract may be determined by specific assignment or submission guidelines and the conventions of a discipline or field of study.

## Sample Abstract (APA Format)

### Abstract

Disruptions in sleep patterns, such as insomnia or sleep deprivation, are associated with an increased risk of developing and/or exacerbating mental health disorders. In recent decades, the practice of sleep hygiene has been used to combat low-quality sleep. To better understand the relationship between the practice of sleep hygiene and overall mental well-being, 350 individuals (ages 21–65) participated in a six-week study where they disconnected from all electronic devices at least one hour before sleeping, restricted their beds to a sleep-only zone, and kept a consistent wake time. At the end of each week, the participants answered a questionnaire evaluating their mental health. The results from this study suggest that the implementation of sleep hygiene increases emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and overall psychological resilience.