THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Writing Centre

Abstracts

Definition	The abstract is a summary that communicates the main ideas of a paper to potential readers. It is not a forward or an introduction to the project, nor is it a supplement to the project (as it should not contain new information).
Length	The abstract is usually between 100 and 250 words. Longer projects (e.g., theses and dissertations) can have abstracts up to 350 words. Check submission guidelines for a specific word count requirement.
Content	The abstract should cover all the sections included in the project. Typically, this includes summaries of the following: • **Research topic** (or questions or thesis): the main idea of the paper or the problem(s)/question(s) the paper addresses. • **Background** (or literature review): brief contextual information on the topic and/or a summary of relevant published research. • **Method**: the process through which the research data was collected (i.e. surveys, focus groups, algorithms). • **Results**: the findings of the study. • **Conclusions** (or discussion): the answers to the original research question(s), and the interpretation and significance of the results. The abstract usually gives most weight to the findings (results) of the research. However, depending on the project, the method and conclusions may also be given extra attention.
Some Helpful Suggestions	Here are some key points to keep in mind as you work on your abstract: • Look at other abstracts for articles in your field to get an idea of what it should look like. • The abstract should be able to convey your main ideas without the reader needing to read the paper. • Do not reuse written portions of your project; you should write your abstract using original wording. • Do not present the research of other scholars unless your project is specifically about another's work (such as an analysis or critique); there should not be anything in your abstract that you need to cite. • Even though the abstract is a summary, make sure you use precise, descriptive information rather than broad, sweeping statements. • Follow the same outline as your project; do not present the material in a different order.