

Abstract and executive summary

The abstract

- Most research articles and reports are prefaced by an abstract.
- An abstract is an overview of the entire text.
- It is sometimes called a synopsis.
- Unlike the introduction, which leads the audience to the body of the text, the abstract is a text about a text – it provides a commentary on the text that follows from beginning to end.
- It is short, half- to one-page summary where each new sentence is new information so that a concise summary is achieved without paragraphing.
- It is usually written impersonally.
- Check that your abstract has at least one sentence about each section of the report, and in the same order.
- It should be written after the report is completed, when you have an overview of the whole text, and placed on the first page of the report.

The executive summary

- An executive summary is derived from the business practice of giving executives a concise outline of the main points in a report, indicating where in the report to locate more detailed information.
- The summary may be several pages long for a long report, and may include headings and dot points or numbered points.
- It must be concise and without details, providing a commentary on the main points and follow the sequence of the report itself.
- Like the abstract, it should be written after the report is completed, when you have an overview of the whole text, and placed on the first page of the report.

Adapted from the following source:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

